Saviours of Islamic Spirit

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Volume II

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FOREWORD

I am glad to present the second volume of the Saviours of Islamic Spirit before the readers. The first volume of the book covered the revivalist endeavours made during the first six centuries of the Islamic era, from Caliph ʿUmar ibn Abdul Azīz to Maulānā Jalāl ud-dīn Rūmī. In this volume the biographical accounts, thoughts and achievements of three luminaries of the eighth century after Hijrah are sought to be presented.

In the Urdu version of this book, the second volume had to be exclusively devoted to Sheikh-ul-Islam Ibn Taimiyah because his splendid achievements in the intellectual and religious fields were quite extensive and varied. It is not at all extravagant to see the reverberating influence of Ibn Taimiyah's thought in the generations succeeding him. Of late, the more intelligent and educated section of the Muslims has shown even greater interest in the works and researches of Ibn Taimiyah. However, I considered it appropriate to include in the present volume the accounts of two more personalities, dealt with in the third part of its Urdu version, since all the three belong to the eighth century. These luminaries of Islam—Sheikh-ul-Islām Hafiz Ibn Taimiyah, Sultān-ul-Auliā Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliā and Makhdūm-ul-Mulk Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī—differ not only in time and space but also in their temperaments, efforts and achievements; yet, one would see a significant similarity of common ideal for which they all worked throughout their lives. All of them fought against

internal deterioration caused by ignorance of the masses, protested against external encroachments of alien thought and customs and called a halt to the decadence of Muslim society by summoning it back to the original purity and order of Islam. Their techniques differed according to their circumstances and needs of the time, but they all tried to re-create the true bonds of relationship between the believer and the Supreme Being.

It has to be borne in mind, in this context, that by the middle of the eighth century the centre of Islamic religious and intellectual activities had shifted itself to India where a powerful Muslim power had been firmly established. Simultaneously, the ravages of the Mongols had destroyed all traces of culture and civilization from Turkistan and Persia, in the east, to Syria and borders of Egypt, in the west, and extinquished the lamp of Abbasid Caliphate for ever. For several hundred years to come, India had to assume the educational and intellectual and and religious and spiritual leadership of the world of Islam. A historian has thus inevitably to turn his attention to this new centre of Islam. It is for this reason that a portion of this volume and one or two subsequent volumes, whenever they are written, would have to be devoted to the revivalist movement in this country.

The reader will find in this volume a new religious dimension of Islam revealed by Makhdūm Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī. This is the inner and esoteric dimension of Islam, with its own peculiar concepts, imageries and modes of expression, experienced in a new environment and set forth not in Arabic but in Persian, which had by then become the cultural lingua-franca of Turkistan, Persia and India. Mohi ud-dīn Ahmad must have found it difficult to render this portion in English, but, as far as I have been able to see, he has acquitted himself well of this onerous task. The difficult nature of his undertaking will be realised by those who have had to describe essentially eastern religious experiences in a foreign language like English.

With this brief prologue, I place this volume in the hands of my readers. I hope that they would welcome it as enthusiastically as they had received the earlier part of the book.

Lucknow,
Shawwal 14, 1334
October 31, 1974

Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

TRANSLITERATION

The dashes to mark the long vowels : ā as in far ; ū as in loose : ī as in mean have been retained, leaving other conventional signs. Two more signs ʿ and ʾ representing the Arabic *ain* and *hamza* have also been retained. The sounds of K and dj used in the Encyclopaedia of Islam have been replaced by q and j respectively, which are now in common use. Where the two consonants—*ch, dh, gh, kh, sh,* and *th* have been used, these are to be sounded together, as, for example, *ch* in 'church', *sh* in 'ship' and *th* in 'think'. The sound of *gh* resembles *gz* as in 'exact', that of *kh* is like *ch* in Scottish *loch* or the German *ach* and *dh* gives the sound *th* in 'father'. Wherever the two consonants are desired to give their own sounds separately, an apostrophe has been inserted in between as, for example, in *Ad'ham*, *Is'haq*, etc.

However, where any proper noun is in common use in English or its pronunciation is generally known to the English-speaking people no signs have been used.

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Muslim World in the Seventh Century

Maulana Jalāl ud-dīn Rūmī had sought to refute the exces sive rationalism of the dialecticians which was permeated with the spirit of Greek Philosophy and excessive formalism. Rūmī was, in fact, founder of a new school of scholasticism which was based on a greater sense of realism and profundity of thought than its earlier counterpart, dialectics, the dominant feature of which was employment of cold logical argumentation. Rūmī's thought was grounded in the personal experiences of a sublimated soul, a purified heart and an illuminated self. He was not simply an erudite scholar of religion and a teacher of dialectics, but was also blessed with a keen intellect and an enlightened heart. He was disgusted by syllogism and vain disputation of the dialectics, when he was led by a God-moved soul, through prayer and penance and the grace of God, to the lofty heights of the certitude of knowledge. He soon realised that dialectics was more of an exercise in specious reasoning, an art of confounding one's adversary than propounding the truth. He, therefore, adopted another method of expounding the mysteries of mute reality and metaphysical truths which reposed trust in the

intuitive experience, intimate and personal, for that could be felt deeply in the core of one's heart.

But, something more was needed to combat the evil effects of philosophy and dialectics. Theological philosophy, too, delved into the secrets of imperceptible realities and freely discussed the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being. Islam had not left man groping in the gloom of uncertainty in so far as the postulates of faith are concerned; instead, it had expounded these matters in a much more lucid and easy manner intelligible to all and sundry. For every ethical theory shaping the behaviour of an individual or the culture of a society must be rooted in the philosophical conception of the relationship between man and Ultimate Reality; it had of necessity to be set forth by Islam quite clearly so that no further speculative effort was needed in that direction. The prophets alone, declared Islam, were the fount of knowledge in regard to the realities beyond the ken of human perception and the unverifiable, incomprehensible Ultimate Being; and, therefore, their teachings constituted the last word on a subject which could not be adequately comprehended by man's intellect. The philosophy had, for that reason, no right, no *locus standi*, to intrude in a matter of which it did not possess even rudimentary knowledge—the basic premises from which it could infer the logical conclusions drawn by it. But the questions which philosophy sought to discuss did not simply admit any analysis or speculation, nor were the philosophers capable of undertaking the task; but, curiously enough, philosophy considered it prudent to meddle with them, trying to explain and elucidate and even to bring in its verdict on them. The constant aim of its endeavour was to trace every question down to its source and discover the general principles underlying every metaphysical phenomenon as if it were an organic matter capable of being analysed in a laboratory.

Dialectics came into existence to answer the questions raised by philosophy. But, it soon absorbed the spirit of its adversary and itself turned into a theological philosophy, discussing those very questions, employing the same claim of reasoning and

trying, like philosophy, to ascertain the nature and attributes of the Divine Being through the speculative categories of reasoning. In fine, dialectics, too, turned a deaf ear to the teachings of the prophets of God, and, placing reliance on limited human intellect, tried to explain the inexplicable in terms of Greek metaphysical terminology borrowed from philosophy. All this vain effort resulted in complication and concealment of the truth behind a veil of words and phrases although the nature and attributes of Divinity could have been explained in a simple, direct and intelligible manner to the satisfaction of all minds, and capable of enkindling everyone's heart. The task could have indeed been accomplished in the light of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, but the dialecticians preferred to compile voluminous treatises on philosophic interpretation of the simple tenets of faith which betrayed how far it was influenced by Greek thought even though it claimed to refute the latter. This was a development opposed to the spirit of the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Traditions, and, accordingly, a sizable section of the Muslims never agreed with the views put forth by the dialecticians. Still, a savant of religious sciences with a penetrating intellect, extensive knowledge and firm conviction in the revealed truth was needed at that time for expounding the creed and its doctrines in a faithful yet convincing manner.

Islam was, at that time, confronted with several other internal and external dangers. A new evangelical movement was taking shape amongst the Christians which sought to censure Islam and set up Christianity as the only saving principle for humanity. The incessant attacks by the Crusaders on Palestine along with the presence of a large number of Christians of European origin in Syria and Cyprus had emboldened them to criticize the prophethood of Muhammad, to compose works on the truthfulness of Christianity and to invite the Muslims to debate and argumentation.

Another danger, rather more severe and hurtful to Islam was that posed by a so-called Muslim sect known as Bātinites. It had a peculiar creed interwoven from the texture of

Magian dogma, Platonic concepts and dangerous political ambitions, and its followers like Ismā'ilites, Assassins, Drūzes and Nusayris were always too willing to help the enemies of the Muslims. Not unoften were foreign aggressions the result of conspiracies hatched by the Bātinites. They sided with the crusaders when the latter attacked Syria and Palestine and were awarded with offices of dignity and confidence when the Christians established themselves in Syria. Throughout the reign of Zengī and Ayyubid dynasties the Bātinites continued to conspire against the then Muslim sovereigns and, when the Tartar hordes invaded the Muslim lands, they joined hands with them to make common cause against Islam. Besides this, by posing themselves as a sect of the Muslims, they could easily sow the seeds of intellectual dissension and spread irreligiousness and apostasy among the simple-minded folk. In order, therefore, to warn the Muslims from being further duped by the Bātinites and also to punish them for the abominable crimes already committed by them, it was necessary to expose their nefarious activities and blasphemous beliefs.

Apart from these, free intercourse with non-Muslims, certain external influences and the indolence of the then doctors of religion had all combined to introduce among Muslims certain impious ideas running counter to the concept of Unity and overlordship of God Almighty Like the Jews and Christians, the Muslims had begun to glorify their saints and elevated souls as those nearer to God exercising some of the Divine functions. Acting on the pagan principle—We worship them only that they may bring us near unto Allah[1]—even the educated saw no harm in supplicating to the departed souls and martyrs or resorted to practices worshipful in manners and gestures even though the Prophet of Islam had strictly forbidden his followers to indulge in such practices. The careless and unguarded believer often yielded to the temptation of participating in feasts and festivals of the non-Muslim *zimmis* and adopted their manners and customs

1. Q. XIXX : 3

which wore the appearance of harmless pleasure or innocent entertainment. The polytheistic beliefs and customs of the non-Muslims being closely interwoven with every circumstance of their private and public life, the untutored minds of the Muslim laity were artfully led to withdraw their adoration from the Creator to the abominable associates of divinity. In order to warn the Muslims against these impious ideas and practices which were destructive of the religious value of orthodox Islam, it was necessary to start a reformative movement which could maintain the purity of faith by uprooting irreligious rituals and practices.

On the other side, certain indiscreet schools of mysticism in Islam had, for reasons intellectual as well as those pertaining to their development, absorbed neo-Platonic and Hindu doctrine of initiation in divine mysteries. These mystical-ascetic attitudes had been so mixed up with the Islamic beliefs and doctrines that it had become difficult to distinguish one from the other. The popular thought of the Muslim mystics showed visible traces of neo-Plantonic gnosticism and Hindu pantheism, incarnation and union, cult of esoteric meanings and hidden realities and antinomian practices. Although some of the eminent leaders of mystic thought had vehemently protested against these doctrines, still, a large part of the *sūfīs* insisted on them and quite a few of them even resorted to wonder-working and magic spells. A misguided sect of the Rafāᶜīyah mystic order, which was quite popular in the seventh and the eighth century of the Islamic era, had taken to divination, charms and wonder-working as a spiritual instrument. Thus, the *sūfīs*, with their tremendous influence on the uneducated masses, were spreading ideas completely divorced from the Qur᾿ānic system of thought.

In the intellectual circles, too, rigidity and stagnation had overtaken the theologians who considered it a grievous sin to deviate from the corpus of their own juristic schools. In their disputes over theological differences, they tried to interpret the canon in accordance with their own cherished views instead of subordinating their interpretations to the supremacy of the

Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. The doors of legislative process which imparts dynamism to the legal system had almost been closed. The demands of the changing social problems required study of the entire corpus of legal doctrines of the earlier legists and thinkers, an insight into the teachings of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, academic research and intellectual effort in the light of accepted juristical norms but the rigidity of approach on the part of the then theologians had so numbed their intellectual capabilities that nobody dared to re-interpret the Law for keeping it abreast of the changing conditions. The legal system of Islam had thus lost its originality and dynamism, thanks to the erroneous view that nothing could now be added to the *corpus juris* of the *Sharī'ah* already formulated by the earlier teachers.

These were, broadly, the disruptive forces which had to be counteracted by a systematic effort before any movement of Islamic renaissance could be started. In its conflict with the speculative reasoning applied by the dialecticians, Islam required a doctor of religion deeply versed in all the categories of philosophy and dialectics, their points of difference and their growth and development. For the polemical disputes raised by the Christians, a man of vast learning fully acquainted with Christianity as well as other religions, especially their original scriptures and the amendments and interpolations to which these had been subjected from time to time, was needed who could undertake a comparative study of the different religions. Similarly, the Bātinite heresy could be combated only by a man who was fully conversant with the beliefs and dogmas of all the Bātinite sects. The reform needed for eradication of external influences, rites and customs and such other un-Islamic practices as saint-worship required a doctor of faith not only animated by zeal for Islam and abhorrence of polytheistic cults but also capable of distinguishing clearly Islam from un-Islam and discerning even the faint traces of the pagan past. He had had to learn the lesson of unalloyed *Tawhīd* directly from the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, and follow in the foot-steps of the companions of the holy Prophet rejecting all those prevalent practices of his

time which cut across the true concept of the Oneness of God. The revitalisation of the intellectual effort required a master-mind—a theologian, a Traditionist and a legist, all combined into one—a man who had mastered the entire theological literature, had such a command over the Qur'ān and the Traditions that anything not acceptable to him could easily be rejected as untrustworthy; was deeply-versed in the lexicography, grammar and usage of the Arabic language; had an encyclopaedic knowledge of all the juristic schools; had a developed sense of interpreting the rules of the *Sharīʿah* and drawing analogical inferences from the teachings and practices of the earlier masters; and, lastly, he had to have been endowed with an incisive intellect and prodigious retentive memory like the Traditionists of the earlier times bearing testimony to what was thus predicted by the Prophet of Islam: "The parable of my people is that of rain: nobody knows whether its beginning is better or its last."[1]

Thus the man of the hour was to have not only mastered all the religious and secular sciences but he was also to possess all the ennobling qualities of mind and heart, a penetrating intellect, logical thinking, mental grasp, breadth of vision and encyclopaedic knowledge so that he could be held in the highest esteem as an illustrious scholar and master by his contemporaries. He had also to be a man of spirits so that he could willingly put his life at stake for what he deemed to be right. If, on the one hand, religious and political opponents of Bātinites were being eliminated by terrorism and murder, any effort to oppose the popular *Ṣūfī* orders was, on the other, likely to earn the displeasure of the masses as well as the ruling elite. Similarly, the slightest deviation from the views held by earlier legists was sure to be condemned as impious and irreligious inviting severe condemnation by the then doctors of religion. Thus, the man aiming at the reconstruction of the religious life and thought of the then Muslim society had to have the courage to

1. *Tirmizī* on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik

set his face against the then governments and the chiefs of State, the misguided *ʿulama* and the popular opinion of the time, and be willing to fight relentlessly on all fronts for the restoration of the true faith. Such was the man needed by the world of Islam in the eighth century after Hijrah, and it did find him in the person of Sheikh-ul-Islam Ibn Taimiyah, who, by his single-minded devotion and idealism yoked with a strong practical sense, erudite scholarship and dauntless courage rescued the world of Islam from the rut of intellectual lethargy and demoralisation.

Political and Social Conditions

For a proper assessment of the achievements of Ibn Taimiyah it is necessary to touch upon the complex of political, social, religious and intellectual atmosphere of the time within which Ibn Taimiyah had to struggle for renovation of Islamic thought and social life. It was, indeed, a critical period of Islamic history, beset by fast moving events.

Five years had elapsed since the sack of Baghdad and three years after the capture of Haleb (Aleppo) and Damascus by the Mongols, when Ibn Taimiyah was born. As a child he must have heard the stories of cruelty and barbarism of the Tartar hordes invading the Muslim lands. When he was seven years of age, his home town of Herran, situate in the north of Mongol occupied territory of Iraq, falling between the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris, was invaded by the Tartars. Like numerous other people belonging to that town his own family moved on towards Damascus to seek a place of safety. Everywhere he saw people terror-stricken, appalled and panicky, running away for their life in utter confusion and disorder. Later on, he could never forget the stupefied people scared to death by the brutality of the Tartar legions. Ibn Taimiyah would have also seen the destruction wrought by the barbarian Tartar legions and heard of the innumerable stories of terrifying cruelty perpetrated by them which must have raised a storm of hatred in his bosom against the brutal invaders and aroused the feelings

of sympathy and compassion for the unfortunate victims of unprecedented tyranny.

At the same time, he must have also heard of the brilliant victory won by Al-Malik al-Zāhir Baibers only three years before his birth at ʿAin Jalūt. It might have imparted to his agitated heart, as to many others of his time, a sense of satisfaction and reassuring confidence in the sword-arm of Islam.

The Memlūks of Egypt

About twelve years before Ibn Taimiyah was born, the Memlūks had taken over the administration of Egypt and Syria. The Memlūks, who were also known as *Bahriyah*,[1] were the Turk slaves of the last Ayyubid Sultan Al-Malik Al-Sāleh Ayyūb (d. 647 A.H.). One of these Memlūks, ʿIzz ud-dīn Aibeck al-Turkmānī had ascended the throne under the title of Al-Malik al-Muʿīz in 647 A.H. after putting to sword Turān Shah, the descendent of Al-Malik al-Sāleh. He was succeeded by his son Nūr ud-dīn ʿAlī when he was killed in 655 A.H. Nūr ud-dīn ʿAli was overthrown by Saif ud-dīn Katz, once the Prime Minister of ʿIzz ud-dīn Aibeck in 657 A.H. He was the first Memlūk Sultan who gave a crushing defeat to the Tartars. However, only a year after Saif ud-dīn Katz donned the purple, he was slain by Rukn ud-dīn Baibers, who was also a slave of Al-Malik al-Saleh Najm ud-dīn Ayyūb. Baibers ascended the throne with the title of Al-Malik al-Zāhir and ruled over Egypt for eighteen years. He won splendid victories over the invading crusaders and Tartars.

When Ibn Taimiyah was born, Egypt and Syria were ruled by Al-Malik al-Zahir Baibers and when the latter died, Ibn Taimiyah was fifteen years of age. Baibers was the first Muslim sovereign who consolidated his forces to give many a crushing defeat to the enemies of Islam. Ibn Kathīr writes of him in

1. Meaning the sea-man, they had derived this name from *Bahr* or sea, as river Nile is called. Memlūks had their settlements by the side of river Nile.

Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah :

"Capable, courageous and brave, Baibers was always alive to the dangerous designs of his enemies and ready to meet the threat from any quarter. He endeavoured to strengthen the disorganised Muslim power. Raised by Providence to reorganise and strengthen the dejected and decimated Muslim forces, he was, in truth, like a thorn in the flesh of Tartars and Crusaders. He put a ban on the sale of wine and expelled the hardened criminals from his dominions. He could never take rest until the wickedness or wrong brought to his notice was set right."[1]

Baibers held sway over the territories extending from the river Euphrates in the East to the farthest limits of Sudan in the South, with Egypt as its centre and Cairo as its Capital. The large number of educational institutions established by Baibers and the presence of the Abbāsid Caliph Al-Mustansir b'Illāh in Egypt had attracted many renowned doctors of religion to Cairo which had thus become the nerve-centre of political, intellectual and cultural activities in the East.

Baibers was animated by a genuine feeling of love for Islam and fighting in the way of God, but he was arrogant and high-handed also as the autocrat sovereigns generally are. The annalists of his time have listed numerous acts of his haughty and despotic behaviour along with the brilliant victories won by him. One of these incidents relates to his regrettable misbehaviour with Imām Nawavī.[2]

The kingdom of Egypt and Syria ruled for eighteen long years by Baibers so quickly changed hands after his death that nine sultans ascended the throne within 33 years between 676 A.H. to 709 A.H. During this period only one ruler of grit and ability presided over this Islamic Kingdom. He was Al-Malik al-Mansūr Saif ud-dīn Qalāwoon who inflicted a crushing defeat on the Tartars in 678 A.H. and liberated Tripolis from the

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1. Ibn Kathīr, Vol. XIII, p. 276
2. *Tabaqāt-us-Shāfe'iyah*, Vol. V, p. 168

crusaders after 185 years of Christian domination over the city. He donned the Imperial purple for twelve years from 678 A.H. to 689 A.H. but after his death the kingdom again fell to the lot of incompetent rulers. At last Mansūr Qalawoon's son Al-Malik al-Nāsir Muhammad ibn Qalawoon wielded the sceptre of authority for the third time in 709 A.H. and ruled over the kingdom for the next thirty-two years. Muhammad ibn Qalawoon was the contemporary sovereign during whose rule Ibn Taimiyah held aloft the banner of reform and renovation. Blessed with several qualities of mind and heart like Baibers and his own father Mansūr Qalawoon, he became a source of unity and strength to his kingdom. He too, like his predecessors, dealt smashing defeats upon the Tartars.

During the whole of this period, Iraq, Iran and Khurasan continued to smother under the despotic control of the Tartars. Baghdad was not restored to the Muslims until its Tartar ruler embraced Islam. The Abbāsid Caliph of Egypt himself led an expedition against Iraq and Baibers too made several attempts to regain Iraq, but none of these efforts proved successful. Memlūks, however, held the reign of government over Egypt, Sudan, Syria and Hejaz.

System of Government

The State religion of the Memlūk sultanate was Islam; the kings and the nobles believed in and adored Islam; fought for its defence; ecclesiastical dignitaries like Qāzīs and Sheikh-ul-Islams were regularly appointed by the State; the *Sharī*ʿ*ah* was enforced as the law of the land; educational institutions, free from State control, imparted religious instruction; but, despite all these the sultans were the pivot of politico-military structure of government. All decisions ultimately rested with the King and his counsellors, which, sometimes, even limited the operation of the *Sharī*ʿ*ah* laws. In its structure and organisation, it was a military oligrachy without any constitution, a codified law or a consultative body.

Al-Malik al-Zāhir Baibers and other Memlūk sultans,

undoubtedly, always tried to obtain the support of the religious leaders and if the *ʿulama* ever strongly opposed any measure of the government, it was postponed or given up. When Imām Nawavī strongly condemned the royal edict to confiscate all the fiefs of landlords in Egypt and Syria, Baibers expressed his displeasure with the Imām and forced him to leave Damascus, but he could not enforce his decision and the *status quo* was maintained. The entire administrative organ rested on the hereditary system but it was often disrupted by a powerful military general. In fine, it was not founded on the Islamic principles of polity. A system of government congenial to Islamic thought and spirit required the head of the State to be a capable ruler enjoying the confidence of the community. Memlūk sultanate, just the other way, owed its existence solely to the personal grit and ambition of the rulers. The Memlūk traditions of absolute monarchy, powerful aristocracy and increasing concentration of military power enabled the ambitious military leaders to wrest power whenever such an opportunity arose. The slaves of Ayyūbid dynasty took over the empire from their masters, thanks chiefly to their own effort; courage and prowess. Although every Memlūk sultan tried to ensure that one of his sons wielded the sceptre after him, the Memlūk tradition re-asserted itself time and again, and whenever an opportunity was afforded, a valiant and zestful general replaced the rightful prince. This, naturally, encouraged internal conflict and civil war to get hold of the reigns of government, but the Memlūks always united to face any threat of aggression from the Tartar or the Crusaders' quarters.

Moral and Social conditions

The ruling class of the Turkoman tribes was conscious of its superiority and kept itself aloof from the local population. It spoke Turkish dialects and used Arabic only for offering prayers or conversing with the religious leaders and the local population. Most of them, however, knew Arabic barely sufficient to perform the obligatory religious duties. Nevertheless, they

respected the doctors of faith, the pious and the elect, constructed mosques and *madrasās* and did not discriminate against anyone on grounds of race or language. Still, the higher civil and military assignments went to the Turkoman elite. Similarly, most of the grandees, noblemen and landlords holding fiefs in lieu of military services were Turkomans who made economic gains at the expense of the cultivators and labourers. An effort made by Hosam ud-dīn Lājeen in 697 A.H. to redistribute the agricultural holdings for improving the economic conditions of the tillers of the soil proved abortive as the Turkoman chiefs opposing the measure rose in revolt against him.

Another influential section of the urban population in Syria and Egypt consisted of the Tartar prisoners of war who had settled, in large numbers, in these lands. These countries were full of them, as al-Maqrīzī reports, during the reign of Al-Malik al-Zāhir Baibers and their manners and customs had percolated into the local population. They embraced Islam, no doubt, but, they also continued to adhere to their national characteristics, habits and customs. There were really only a few examples of the new converts to Islam adopting the ethical and social ideals of their new faith marking a total break with their past cultural traditions, manners and morals. It was a distinctive characteristic of the Prophet's companions alone, who, as if transformed by a Prophetic miracle, eschewed all traces of the conflict between their adopted faith and the pagan past. They appeared, in truth, to have been reborn in Islam. This could not have been expected of the converts of a later age when there was neither any arrangement for their guidance and training in the Islamic way of life nor was the Muslim society dynamic enough to absorb and re-fashion the new entrants into its fold. The social life of these Tartar neo-Muslims was, for these reasons, an admixture of Islamic outlook and pagan traditions. The famous historian of Egypt, al-Maqrīzī, who has summed up all that he found floating down the stream of time describes the social and religious behaviour of these new converts to Islam in these words :

"These Tartars had learnt, in the Muslim countries, to

read the Qur'ān and adhered to religious canons and observances but their life was an amalgam of vices and virtues. They subjected themselves to the decisions of the Chief Qāzī in matters relating to prayer, fasting, poor-due, *Haj*, charitable endowments, administration of the property of orphans and the disputes between the espouses but in their personal matters, habits and behaviour, they followed the Mongol traditions and the laws promulgated by Chenghiz Khan. They had appointed an administrator known as *Hājib* to adjudicate upon matters falling in the sphere of their customary law, to restore justice to the weak amongst them and to impose sanctions against the bully and strong. Disputes between the Tartar traders in commercial matters as well as those relating to property and land holdings were also decided in accordance with their own traditional laws."[1]

The increasing tendency of the local population to adopt the Tartar usages even to the extent of accepting some of the inapt ideas was outcome of free intermixing of the Tartar and the Arab Muslims. A parallel example of the interchange of ideas culminating into a mutual absorption of each other's cultural strains and thought patterns can be seen in the contact between Europe and Asia which first began in the battle-fields during the Crusades.

The free intermixing of different nationalities had thus given birth to a new society, neither Arab nor Islamic in its make up, which had brought to the fore new social and cultural problems. This had, naturally, increased manifold the responsibility of those religious doctors and reformers who abhorred un-Islamic beliefs and practices adopted by the Muslims. They wanted to bring the Muslim society back to the path chalked out by the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*—a path treaded by the earlier preceptors in compliance with the Divine Command : Enter wholly into submission (unto Him).[2]

1. *Khutat-i-Misr*, Vol. II, p. 221
2. Q. II : 208

Intellectual Atmosphere

Barring a few exceptions we find in the century preceding Ibn Taimiyah widespread educational efforts and plentiful writings on numerous subjects. But, by and large, most of the literature produced during this period lacks depth of thought and profundity and can be classified as elucidations and interpretations of the earlier works. This lack of originality was an outcome of the stratification of juristic schools which, content to remain within the inviolable bounds of their own making, rejected the least deviation from the teachings of their masters. In principle, all the four juristic schools of orthodox Islam were deemed to be right, but the votaries of each regarded the interpretation of their own school as the only faithful version of the Divine ordinances. The only consideration they could show to others was to concede that the exposition of the Law by their own *Imām* though largely correct might contain a few mistakes, but that of the others were likely to be correct only on a few points but were much more faulty.

The followers of every juristic school, then, considered their own sect to be rightly guided, correct and God ordained while the chief effort of their learned theologians had been diverted towards producing arguments proving the pre-eminence of the precursors of their own juristic schools over all others. The psychology of the then doctors of religion is best illustrated by the resentment shown by the *ʿulema* belonging to the Shafeʿī school on the appointment of the Chief Qāzis of other juristic schools in addition to a Shafeʿī State Jurist by Sultan Al-Malik al-Zāhir Baibers. These theologians were indignant that in a country where only a Shafeʿī doctor of law held that office, dignitaries of equal rank should be appointed from amongst the followers of other juristic schools as well. When the rule of Baiber's progeny over Egypt came to an end a few years after this incident, it was construed by certain Shafeʿī *ʿulama* as a Divine punishment for the Baiber's action.[1]

1. *Tabaqāt-us-Shafeʿiyah*

Narrow-mindedness and rigidness were not limited to the legists alone, for the fixity of theological philosophy had restricted it, perhaps, to a far greater extent to canalised ideas. The followers of the four schools of orthodox Islam acknowledged each other's validity; they met, conversed and had cordial relations amongst them, but it was impossible to see a similar tolerance between the Ash'arites and Hanbalites. Whereas the legists debated simply about the correctness of their own interpretation, the disputation between the scholasticians was more often meant to prove that the other side had lapsed from faith. The credal fixity of the dialecticians, as distinct from theological rigidity, stimulated by a flair for logical disputation had made these polemical wranglings a popular intellectual pursuit. The grandees and the nobles, the learned and the laity all took a keen interest in these verbal engagements.

As already stated earlier, mysticism seems to have captured the heart and soul of a great majority. The sufistic thought had absorbed numerous un-Islamic and foreign ideas while most of the *sufis*, illiterate and profane, were spreading infidelity and indifference to the teachings of Islam.

A section of the philosophers was busy, on the other hand, in spreading its own agnostic ideas, often overtly, and at times covertly, completely disregarding the prophetic teachings. There were others too who wanted to reconcile religion with philosophy, for, they had assumed the superiority of reason over faith. Both these groups were, however, fossilised followers of Aristotle and Plato; they held the two in the highest esteem as fount of all wisdom, and their theories as inviolate immutable.

This was, then, the political, social, ethical, and intellectual atmosphere obtaining at the time in which Ibn Taimiyah was brought up and wherein he rose to give a call for all-round reform and regeneration of the Muslim world.

II

Early Life

Birth and Childhood of Ibn Taimiyah

Born on Monday, the 10th of Rabī-ul-Awwal 661 A.H., Ahmad Taqī ud-dīn Ibn Taimiyah came of a reputed family of theologians belonging to Harran near Edessa (Roha)[1] in northern Iraq.

His father, Shahab ud-dīn ᶜAbdul Halīm Ibn Taimiyah (d. 682 A.H.), was the pulpiter of the great Ummayyad mosque and a professor of Traditions in *Darul Hadīth ᶜAssakuriyah* of Damascus.[2] Likewise, his grandfather Abul Barkāt Majd ud-dīn Ibn Taimiyah (d. 652 A.H.) was a renowned teacher of Hanbalite school and a man of letters, whose *Muntaqi-ul-Akhbār* classifying all the Traditions serving as the source of legislation is still held as a work of great erudition.[3]

This was the time when the entire world of Islam was timorously trembling with fear under the terrible blows dealt with by the barbaric Tartar hordes, but the lands of Iraq and Jazirah were at the moment special targets of their horrid depredations. Ibn Taimiyah was seven years of age when the Tartars mounted an attack on Harran. Fearful of massacres, rapines, conflagrations and, above all, the indignities which

1. Known as Orfa, the town is now in Turkey
2. Ibn Kathīr, Vol. XIII, p. 303
3. Shaukānī later wrote a commentary on *Mantaqi-ul-Akhbār* under the title of *Nail-ul-Autār* in eight volumes.

were worse than death, the family of Ibn Taimiyah left Harran along with the terror-smitten multitude to seek asylum in some other Muslim country. There was no question of proceeding to Iraq which had already fallen to the Tartar arms. They had, therefore, to bend their steps to Damascus which was a comparatively safer place ruled by the powerful Memlūks of Egypt. Leaving behind their entire belongings, Ibn Taimiyah's family chose to take away with them only the valuable treasure of books they had, but, with no beasts of burden being available to pull the carts, they had themselves to perform that job. Confusion and disorder prevailed everywhere, while the fugitives, filled with grief and terror were always fearful of being overtaken by the Tartar cavalry. Once, when a Tartar column was near at hand, the wheels of the cart got stuck up. The members of Ibn Taimiyah's family fell prostrate on the ground and fervently beseeched God to save them from the impending calamity. At last, the cart moved on and the carvan got ahead safely on its way.[1]

In Damascus

The news of the arrival of this illustrious family soon spread in Damascus. The people, specially the educated, were aware of the scholarly achievements of Majd ud-dīn ibn Taimiyah and ʿAbdul Halīm ibn Taimiyah. The latter, Ibn Taimiyah's father, was invited to begin discourses on *Hadīth* in the Great Ummayyad mosque and the *Darul Hadīth ʿAssakuriyah* which were attended by a large number of students and scholars.

Prodigious Memory

Ibn Taimiyah's family was known for its strong retentive memory. His father and grandfather both had an eidetic memory but the prodigious treasure house of the mind endowed to Ibn Taimiyah surpassed even his forefathers. When he was still a child, the feats of his marvellous memory used to leave

1. *Al-Kawākib-ud-Durriyah*

the people lost in amazement. An eye-witness account of his amazing memory preserved in *Al-ᶜUqūd ud-Durriyah* runs as follows:

"Once a scholar of Haleb who had come to Damascus heard of a prodigious child, Ahmad ibn Taimiyah, renowned for his marvellous retentive power. Coming to a tailor's shop near Ahmad's house he sat down there to wait for the child. After a short while, the tailor pointed out the boy sought by him. He summoned the boy and asked him to wipe off his tablet so that he could write on it. The boy handed over the clean tablet to the scholar who wrote 11 or 13 Traditions on it and then asked the boy to read them once carefully. Now, the scholar took back the tablet and asked the boy to repeat what he had read. The boy repeated them all without a single mistake. The scholar got the tablet wiped off again and wrote thereon a few transmitting chains of the Traditions. The boy went through these and again repeated the whole thing. Astonished at the feat of the boy's memory he remarked: 'If God wills him to live, he would be a genius without a peer in the whole world'."[1]

There are numerous examples of Ibn Taimiyah's amazing feats of memory which lend support to the veracity of this story. In fact, the intellectual marvels of strong retentive power possessed by the Traditionists and other doctors of religion, recorded by historians on the authority of unimpeachable witnesses, show that the story narrated about Ibn Taimiyah is not at all exaggerated.

Education of Ibn Taimiyah

Ibn Taimiyah was from his childhood an industrious student and, as his biographers say, he never took any interest in games and sports. Later on, too, when he had grown up, no diversion, fun or festivity could ever hold his attention. Nevertheless, his

1. *Abū Zahra*, p. 56 (cited from *Al-ᶜUqūd-ud-Durriyah*), p. 21

works bear witness to the fact that he was fully aware of the different sections of society of his time, their habits and customs, manners and morals and even entertainments and recreations. It seems that he had not only spent his time as a scholar buried in books but had also studiously pondered over the problems of life and contemporary society.

Ibn Taimiyah gleaned knowledge of all the secular and religious sciences of his time. He gave special attention to the Arabic literature and gained command over grammar and lexicology. He not only mastered the *Al-Kitāb* of Sibawaih, the greatest authority on grammar and syntax, but he pointed out its mistakes too.[1] His proficiency in this field proved immensely beneficial to him later on in the composition of his own works. He gained a thorough knowledge of the entire collection of prose and poetry available at the time. He also studied the history of pre-Islamic Arabia as well as that of the post-Islamic era. The wide knowledge thus gained by him gave him a breadth of vision not found amongst his contemporaries.

Ibn Taimiyah also learnt, besides these, calligraphy and mathematics from the teachers of these sciences.[2]

Turning to the religious sciences, he studiously learnt the *Sharīʿah* laws, Jurisprudence, *Hadīth* and the Qur'ān. He studied the Hanbali system of law from his own father. In *Hadīth*, he first learnt by heart, as was the custom in those days, Imām Humaidī's *al-Jamʿo bain-us-Sahīhain* and then studied the science from several reputed teachers of *Hadīth* present at the time in Syria. Ibn ʿAbdul Hādī relates that the number of Ibn Taimiyah's teachers in *Hadīth* exceeds two hundred.[3] Among these are included such eminent doctors of *Hadīth* as Ibn ʿAbd ud-Dāyam al-Maqdisī and several others of an equal rank and standing. Ibn Taimiyah thus went through the *Musnad Imām Ahmad* and *Sihāh Sitta* more than once to learn these from

1. *Al-Kawākib-ud-Durriyah*, p. 2
2. *Ibid*, p. 2
3. *Ibid.*, p. 2

different teachers.[1]

Ibn Taimiyah had a fancy for the exegesis of the Qur'ān. As he himself says, he had turned over the leaves of more than a hundred commentaries and glosses of the holy scripture.[2] He was endowed with a bent of mind wont to reflect and meditate upon the pith and meaning of the Qur'an. Ibn Taimiyah has himself explained the way he used to bring his mind to bear upon the study of the Qur'anic verses. Says he:

> "Sometimes I have gone through as many as hundred commentaries of a single verse of the Qur'ān. After I have dipped into these pages I have supplicated God to enlighten me about the true content and significance of the *āyah*. I pray to God thus on these occasions: 'Thou art the Exalted Teacher of Adam and Ibrāhīm. Favour me Thou with the essence of this *āyah*.' Often I betake to an abandoned mosque or wilderness and beseech God with my forehead on the ground: 'O Guide of Ibrāhīm! Grant cognition to me.' "[3]

The Ashᶜarite school of dialectics was then predominant in Egypt and Syria. Sultan Salāh ud-dīn Ayyūbī was himself an Ashᶜarite who had committed to heart, according to the famous historian Maqrīzī, the writings of Qutb ud-dīn Abul Maᶜālī al-Ashᶜarī on scholastic theology. Salāh ud-dīn even got his sons to learn these by heart. With the patronage afforded to the Ashᶜarite school by the princes of Ayyūbid dynasty and later on by the Memlūk sultans of Egypt, the Ashᶜarite school had gained immense popularity in those countries.

Because of the unending polemical wranglings between the Hanbalites and the Ashᶜarite theologians, the former had come to be looked upon as fundamentalists and opponents of the more popular modernist Ashᶜarite school. The Ashᶜarite scholasticism, with its method of argumentation based upon syllogistic

1. *Al-Kwākib-ud-Durriyah*, p. 2
2. *Tafsir Surat-un-Nur*, p. 136
3. *Al-ᶜUqūd-ud-Durriyah*, p. 24

logic, appealed to reason and relied on the apparent meanings of the Qur'ānic text and Traditions. The Hanbalites, just the other way around, were neither adept in discursive reasoning nor in philosophical induction with the result that they were unable to justify their stand as dexterously as the Ashᶜarites. More often they left an impression of being un-intelligent people, inerudite and shallow, having only a smattering of knowledge of inductive reasoning. This would have perhaps been the feeling of a proud and sensitive man, that Ibn Taimiyah was, who resolved to learn all about dialectics and syllogistic forms, logic and philosophy. And he did learn all the ins and outs of these ciences with a fullness of knowledge that enabled him to argue powerfully against the Greek philosophers. He pointed out the limitations of the methods and concepts of these sciences so masterfully that after him no philosopher of note came forward to rebut his criticism.

In brief, Ibn Taimiyah interpreted the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, established the superiority of Islam over heresy, philosophical concepts and other faiths and contributed to a genuine revival of religion after a deep study and deliberation that was necessary for fighting the religious and intellectual waywardness of the time. Seeking to surpass his opponents, the Jews and the Christians, the philosophers and the Bātanites and the mystics and the dialecticians, he mastered the methodology employed by them to attack Islam. In fact, his learning, his erudition, his intellectual attainment and his mental grit always left his adversaries spell-bound. One of his bitterest rivals, Allāma Kamāl ud-dīn al-Zamalkānī, has paid a glowing tribute to Ibn Taimiyah's encyclopaedic knowledge in these words.

> "God had made knowledge of all the sciences as easy for Ibn Taimiyah as iron had been softened for (the prophet) David. Whenever he was asked any question, he answered in a way that the audience thought him to have spent his whole life in acquiring knowledge of that very branch of knowledge alone and acknowledged him as the greatest authority on the subject. Scholars subscribing to

different juristic schools attended his discourses and each one of them learnt something that he had not known earlier. It never happened that he debated any point and was put to shame. Whatever be the subject matter about which he spoke, whether religious or discursive, he surpassed all the authorities on that particular subject. In penmanship, too, he was equally elegant."[1]

The Gifted Teacher

Ibn Taimiyah was only twenty-two when his father died in 682 A.H. Within less than a year he was asked to take the place of his father. The very first address he del vered at that young age, in the presence of such learned doctors as the Chief Qāzi Bahā' ud-dīn ibn az-Zakī as-Shāfe'ī, Sheikh Tāj ud-dīn al-Fazārī, Zain ud-dīn ibn al-Munja Hanbali, was full of thoughts that breathe and words that burn. It was a speech so impressive and forceful, sparkling and majestic that the historian Ibn Kathīr lists it as an "astonishing event" in the annals for the year 683 A.H. "It was so admired by all", writes Ibn Kathīr, "that Sheikh Tāj ud-dīn al-Fazārī himself put down the speech in writing."[2]

In the year 692 A.H. Ibn Taimiyah set out for Haj with a Syrian caravan under the leadership of al-Bāstī.[3]

1. *Al-Kwākib-ud-Durriyah*, p. 5
2. Ibn Kathīr, Vol. XIII, p. 303
3. *Ibid.*, p. 313

III

Trials and Tribulations

Having carved out a prominent place for himself among the leading scholars of Syria, Ibn Taimiyah's fame was fast spreading as a popular lecturer when, in the year 698 A.H., for the first time, an unfortunate incident stirred up a tumult against him.

Some persons belonging to Hamah submitted a question to Ibn Taimiyah asking him to explain the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being in the light of certain Quranic verses and Traditions which spoke of these in finite signs and symbols. Ibn Taimiyah gave a detailed reply to the question[1]. He explained the view held by the companions of the Prophet and their successors, the religious doctors of yore and the dialecticians like Imām Abul Hasan Al-Ashᶜarī, Qāzī Abū Baqr Baqillānī, Imām ul-Harmayn and others that a belief in the essential attributes of God is the most important part of the Muslims' faith. Ibn Taimiyah proved from the writings of the earlier authorities that all of them acknowledged the attributes of God whom they regarded beyond all similitude and free from all limitations.

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1. The reply of Ibn Taimiyah covering about 50 pages under the caption *'al-Aqeedatul Hamuyah-tul-Kubra'* is included in the collection entitled *'Majmᶜa-tar-Rasā'il al-Kubra'* published from Egypt in 1323 A.H. The charge levelled against him that he subscribed to anthropomorphic concept of God is absolutely baseless.

Avowal of the Divine attributes by them was neither meant to anthropomorphise Divine attributes nor they considered it necessary to divest Him of all the positive qualities in their craze to prove the eternity of His Being. While insisting that the nature of the Supreme Being cannot be adequately expressed in terms familiar to the finite human understanding they had acknowledged the Supreme Being as the Knowing (or Omniscient), the Powerful (or Almighty), the Willing, the Living, the Hearing, the Seeing and the Speaking. Similarly, the theological doctors of old recognised other attributes ascribed to God, without any interpretation either designed to avoid the similitudes or negating those qualities in a way that reduces His Being into sheer nothingness. Ibn Taimiyah maintained that the conception of the Life, Knowledge or Power did not attribute finite human form or personality to God for He is neither a substance circumscribed with limits not determined by measure; neither does He resemble bodies; neither is He a substance, nor do substances exist in Him; neither is He an accident nor do accidents exist in Him. He sits upon the throne, after the manner which He Himself has described, and in that same sense which He Himself means, which is a sitting far removed from any notion of contact, or resting upon, or local situation. He is above the throne, and above all things, even to the utmost ends of everything that has a being. He is distinct from the creatures by His attributes, neither is there anything besides Himself in His essense, nor is His essence in any other besides Him. Therefore, it is not correct to conceive the inconceivable Being on the pattern of any finite form or substance or to consider the limiting adjuncts of human expression as circumscribing Him with the limitations of finite forms, qualities or personifications.

Ibn Taimiyah went on further to explain that certain dialecticians, either too much impressed by the Greek philosophical concepts or animated by an excessive zeal to uphold the Unity of Godhead, interpreted the Divine attributes in a way that was directly opposed to what the Prophet had taught and was understood by the companions and later scholars. The negation of

Divine attributes, more often, ended up in reducing God Almighty to a nameless, formless, nothing. The interpretation of these dialecticians was, thus, far removed from the teachings of the precursors of faith, the earlier theologians and even their own mentors. Ibn Taimiyah severely taxed these misguided scholastics whom he called an ignoramus lot unaware of the true worth and merit of the prophetic teachings and blind followers of the Indo-Greek philosophical concepts. He concluded his reply with several examples of philosophers who were ultimately disillusioned by their vain pursuit and ended up with an expression of sorrowful disenchantment. Many of them, said Ibn Taimiyah, acknowledged the religious dogma before joining the great majority.

The reply by Ibn Taimiyah was a full-fledged treatise well documented with quotations from the Qur'ān and the *Hadith*, which restated the truth in a convincing manner, criticised severely the philosophers and dialecticians and sounded a new note in theological writings by its masterly blending of a spirited defence of religion with the elegance of style and expression. The way it was warmly received by the Hanbalites inflamed a feeling of bitter resentment among the dialecticians and ʿAshʿarites who held posts of influence and authority in the administration. Describing the events of 698 A.H., Ibn Kathīr writes that a group of theologians which opposed Ibn Taimiyah admanded that he should appear before the Hanafite Qāzī Sheikh Jalāl Ud-dīn to clarify certain points but Ibn Taimiyah refused to do so. His adversaries kicked up a tumult against him but normal conditions were ultimately restored owing to the firm handling of the situation by Amīr Saif Ud-dīn Jaghān.[1]

The situation might have again taken an ugly turn, but the Tartar advance against Syria left no room for any acrimonious disputation among the educated circles. The occasion, however, afforded another opportunity to Ibn Taimiyah to rise as a spirited defender of the faith and a popular leader of

1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 4

the masses.

Tartar Attack on Damascus

Intelligence in regard to the projected attack on Syria by Ghazān,[1] the Tartar ruler of Iran and Iraq, had begun to pour in the beginning of 699 A.H. It was reported that the Tartar forces were planning to capture Damascus. With the impressions of terror still fresh in the minds of the Muslims, the population of border districts like Haleb and Hamah took to flight. The exodus was so great that a horse could be hired for transport from Hamah to Damascus for two hundred *dirhams*. However, the news that Al-Malik al-Nāsir Muhammad ibn Qalawoon had left Egypt with a powerful army to check the advance of the Tartar forces enabled the terror-stricken Syrians to heave a sigh of relief. Egyptian forces which entered Damascus on the 8th of Rabʿī-ul-Awwal, 699 A.H., were warmly received by the population of the city.

Defeat of Qalawoon

On the 27th of Rabʿī-ul-Awwal, 699 A H. the Egyptian and Tartar armies encountered each other in a bloody battle. The operations of war were conducted by both sides in equal vigour but the Sultan was vanquished and he immediately retreated to Egypt with his remainiug forces. Now Damascus lay open, undefended, before the triumphant armies of Ghazān. The entire nobility of the capital including the Shafeʿite and Mālakite Qāzīs, religious scholars, the administrators and the traders took to flight leaving only the commander of the capital citadel. All the communications leading to the city were cut off, prices increased manifold, public tranquillity was disturbed

1. Ghazān, also known as Mahmūd, was the great grand-son of Chenghiz Khan. He had embraced Islam in 694 A. H. owing to the persuasion of Amīr Tūzaun, but he could not have been expected to have reformed his manners and morals within the short period of five years. The Tartars were then as ferocious and given to rapine and plunder as before their conversion to Islam.

by the prisoners who broke open the gates of the gaol and loot and arson became order of the day. The danger of imminent attack by Ghazān added to the chaos and anarchy in the city which was incapable of putting up any resistance and hopeless of getting relief from any quarter.

Ibn Taimiyah meets Ghazān

Ibn Taimiyah and the remaining patricians of the city then decided that they should lead a delegation of the *'ulama* and other noblemen, which should meet Ghazān and sue for the peace of the city.

The representatives of the city accordingly met Ghazān at Nabak[1] on the 3rd of Rabʿī-ul-Thānī, 699 A.H. Sheikh Kamāl ud-dīn ibn al-Anjā, who accompanied Ibn Taimiyah in the delegation has left a memorable account of his meeting with Ghazān. He says:

> "I was with the Sheikh (Ibn Taimiyah) on this occasion. He set forth in his address to the King the Quranic verses and the Traditions of the Prophet enjoining fairness and just conduct. His voice gradually rising, he was drawing nearer to the king until his knees were about to touch those of Ghazān who was attentively listening to the Sheikh but did not appear to be displeased with him. He was straining his ears as if struck with awe. At last he asked 'Who is he? I have never seen a man like him—so brave and courageous; none has made a dent in my heart as he!' The Sheikh was then introduced to the King. The Sheikh said to the King: 'You claim to be a Muslim. I have been told that you have with you a Qāzī and an *Imām,* a Sheikh and a *muazzin*; yet you have deemed it proper to march upon the Muslims. Your forefathers were heathens, but they always abstained from breaking the promise once made by them. They redeemed the pledges they made but you violate the word of honour given by you. You trample

1. The place is mid-way between Damascus and Hims.

underfoot your solemn declarations in order to lay a hand upon the servants of God !"[1]

Sheikh Kamāl ud-dīn adds that despite Ibn Taimiyah's remonstrance in a strong language, the King bade him good-bye with the highest marks of respect. He even set free, on Ibn Taimiyah's recommendation, a good number of the prisoners. Ibn Taimiyah often used to say: 'Only he fears who has a sickness in his heart.'

Chief Qāzī Abul ʿAbbās, who was also admitted to the imperial presence along with Ibn Taimiyah, has given some more details of this remarkable embassy. He says that when food was brought before them, Ibn Taimiyah refused to partake the meals on the ground that it had come out of the looted property of the Muslims. "At last", adds Abul ʿAbbās, "when the King asked the Sheikh to pray for him, he began by saying: 'O God ! Help Ghazān if he has taken up arms to defend Thy religion ; if not, then do whatever Thou desirest with him." The companions of Ibn Taimiyah trembled with fear lest they should all be executed because of the Sheikh's imprudence but they were amazed to see the King saying amen to his prayer. When Ibn Taimiyah returned to Damascus, he was escorted by 300 nobles and chiefs of the Ghazān's army.[2]

Although Ghazān had granted amnesty to Damascus, the irregular troops of the invader were spreading terror and desolation in the outlying areas and suburbs of the city. Ghazān had nominated Saif ud-dīn Qabjak as his deputy over Syria. His forces entered Damascus and demanded surrender of all arms, horses and wealth concealed by the citizens. In this hour of savage licence, when every passion was inflamed and every restraint was removed, the precepts of religion seldom influenced the behaviour of the newly converted Tartar savages. Several of the most honourable citizens were surprised and massacred ; a large number of innocent women and children were sold into

1. *Al-Kawākib ud-Durriyah*, p. 25
2. *Ibid.*, p. 25

captivity; libraries and charitable trusts were extirpated; and the malicious Tartar soldiers roamed throughout the city in quest of prey and riches. The commander of the fort, Arjawāsh however, refused, under the advice of Ibn Taimiyah, to open the gates of the citadel to the Tartar chief appointed by Ghazān.[1]

Ibn Taimiyah, alongwith a few other respectable citizens of Damascus, repaired again to seek audience with Ghazān but he was not allowed to see the King. In the meantime the Tartar forces laid siege to capture the fort. Ballistas were set up around the fort and the citizens were conscripted for forced labour. Ibn Kathīr writes that the city gave a deserted look as nobody dared to come out of his house except disguised as a Mongol for fear of being obliged to help the Tartar attack on the fort. "During a Friday service in the great Ummayyad Mosque", says Ibn Kathīr, "there were not enough worshippers to make up a single row."[2]

On the 19th of Jamad-ul-Ūla Ghazān left for Iraq, leaving sixty thousand troops under the command of his deputy. He declared his intention to return with a larger force in the ensuing autumn to complete the unfinished campaign of gaining control over Syria as well as Egypt.

After the King had departed, one of his chiefs, Amīr Būlāī', started to ransack the surrounding areas. Vast tracts of land, towns and cities were devastated, a large number of Muslim children were forcibly taken away from their parents to be sold as serfs while Būlāī' himself extracted large sums of money from Damascenes through general extortion and immoderate fines. Ibn Taimiyah decided to meet Būlāī' to alleviate the misfortune of his countrymen. He met Būlāī' on the 8th of Rajab and was successful in liberating quite a good number of the captives,[3] both Muslims and non-Muslims.[4]

1. *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. XIV, pp. 7/8
2. *Ibid.*, p 9
3. *Ibid.*. p. 11
4. *Abu Zahra*, p. 39

In the meantime the news of the Egyptian forces coming to the rescue of Syria was broken by the commander of the Damascus fort. No sooner was this announcement made, the Tartar hordes hurriedly retreated from the city leaving it again without any semblance of administration. Arjawāsh and a few other prominent citizens including Ibn Taimiyah decided to maintain law and order in the metropolis. Ibn Taimiyah was seen during this period keeping vigil by night and exhorting people to take up arms for their defence. These self-appointed guardians of the city also decided to root out the abuses that had flourished during the brief rule of the Tartars. The avarice of Saif ud-dīn Qubjūk had prevailed upon him to patronise the sale of wine which was a source of income to him. Ibn Taimiyah toured the city with his friends and students, destroyed every wine-cask, bowl and cup and punished every drunkard and ruffian in accordance with the law. The courageous action taken by Ibn Taimiyah was received with approbation and pleasure by all the law-abiding people of the city.[2]

Punitive Expedition to the Hills

The Christians, Bātinites and Ismā'ilites settled in the hilly tracts of Syria had afforded whole-hearted support to the Tartar invaders against the Muslims. They had surprised and attacked the retreating Muslim troops, killed many of them and looted their provisions. They were in fact a heretic people, without faith in any religion, who despised all authority and were used to a semi-independent existence in the difficult terrain out of the reach of arms of law.[3]

A punitive expedition was despatched under Jamāl ud-dīn Āqoosh al-Afram after peaceful conditions had been restored in Syria, to punish the recalcitrant hill dwellers of Jard and Kasrwān. Ibn Taimiyah accompanied this expedition with a

1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 12
2. *Ibid.*, p. 16
3. *Ibid.*, p. 23

large number of volunteers and the people belonging to Haurān. Ibn Taimiyah exhorted the tribesmen to renew their allegiance to Jamāl ud-dīn, follow the precepts of true faith and return the property despoiled by them earlier.[1]

The Second Tartar Invasion

For two years, beginning from Rajab, 700 A.H., uncertainty and instability prevailed in Syria. With the report of second Tartar invasion reaching Damascus, people began to abandon their hearths and homes. Ibn Taimiyah started urging people to eschew cowardice and defend their home and honour instead of deserting the capital. He prevailed upon the administration to put a ban on the people leaving the city without obtaining its prior permission. Hardly had the situation been stabilized when the news of advancing Tartar forces reaching a place known as Bīrah was broken. An announcement of *jihād*, the holy war, was made and the glad tidings of Sultan Ibn Qalawoon's departure from Egypt for the defence of Syria were announced. Of a sudden, a communication was received that the Sultan no longer wanted to come for a second encounter with the Tartars. It was natural that the people exasperated by earlier sufferings resolved to transfer their families and belongings to the more secure places in Egypt. Ibn Taimiyah, however, not only arrested the exodus by his powerful and passionate haranguing but also met the Egyptian Governor of Syria in his camp outside Damascus and persuaded him to oppose the progress of the Tartar army. The Governor and other prominent citizens and religious doctors requested Ibn Taimiyah to seek an audience with the Sultan and urge him not only to send the levies but conduct the operations of war himself. Ibn Taimiyah went to Egypt and made a spirited appeal to the Sultan for checking the advance of Tartar forces. He asked him not to be terrified by the multitude of his foe. "Even if Syria had not been a part of your dominions", said Ibn Taimiyah,

1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 12

"It was a duty incumbent on you to have come to its rescue in this hour of danger. The responsibility of its safety rests on your shoulders; but, if you care nothing for its welfare, tell us and we shall make our own arrangements. We shall select a monarch who would at least defend the land against its enemies." Ibn Taimiyah remained with the Sultan for eight days and at last persuaded him to lead his forces for the defence of Syria.

By the time Ibn Taimiyah returned to Damascus a large number of Damascenes had already left the city. Ibn Taimiyah's return with the news of Sultan's impending arrival emboldened the people to make preparations for facing the enemy but the Tartars turned back on this occasion.[1]

Encounter with the Tartar Army

News of the Tartar forces advancing towards Syria was again broken in Rajab, 702 A.H. Delay in the arrival of the Sultan from Egypt was causing panic among the people in Damascus, many of whom again left for safer places. After some time, two detachments of the select Turkish warriors reached Damascus by the end of Shᶜabān that year. Simultaneously, however, a stream of refugees from the northern districts began pouring into Damascus. A controversy was also raised, perhaps, by some overtimid theologians who raised the question whether Damacenes need fight the Tartars at all since the latter had embraced Islam? The legists were asked to define their position in the light of the *Sharīᶜah*, for, the Tartars could neither be called non-believers nor rebels of any Muslim government. Ibn Taimiyah put them in the category of *Khawārij*, i.e. the sect which had revolted against the authority of both the Caliphs ᶜAlī and Muᶜāwiyah and had promoted itself to the dignity of Caliphate, and pronounced the juristic opinion that it was perfectly lawful to fight such people.

The Sultan was still far away while the reports of Tartar forces drawing nearer to the capital were in everyone's mouth.

1. *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. XIV, p. 16

Ibn Taimiyah again went to urge the Sultan who was on his way to Damascus, to speed up his journey. Ibn Taimiyah extorted a solemn oath from the Sultan that he would live or die with the people whom God had entrusted to his care. Assuming the spirit of a hero, he communicated a similar enthusiasm to the troops. Ibn Taimiyah even swore to God that the Egyptians would be victorious this time. He quoted in his support the Quranic verse :

> "Whoso hath retaliated with the like of that which he was made to suffer and then hath been wronged, Allah will succour him."[1]

He felt so assured that if anybody asked him to say: "if it should please God Almighty"; he replied, "Yes, if it should please God Almighty, definitely and unequivocally."[2]

The Muslim forces of Syria and Egypt were at last arrayed against the Tartar armies in the plain of Thaqhab on the 2nd of Ramadhān, 702 A.H. Ibn Taimiyah pronounced the legal opinion that the troops should break the fast on that day. He went to every detachment and the line to offer them something to break their fast and told them of the Tradition which said: "Tomorrow you shall have to face the enemy and you would be stronger if you do not keep fast."

Sultan al-Malik al-Nāsir Muhammad ibn Qalawoon and the Abbāside Caliph Abur Rabʿi Sulaimān were both present in the battlefield. The Sultan fought with indomitable courage and valour; he chained the legs of his horse lest it should run away in the heat of action. After a bloody conflict, which continued till the evening and in which a large number of Turkish veterans and chiefs were killed the Egyptian forces dispersed and dismayed the Tartar arms. Taking advantage of the darkness, a large number of Tartar soldiers took shelter in the ravines and caves, but the Muslims kept vigil for the whole

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1. Q. XXII : 60
2. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 23

night and did not allow them to escape their revenge. Many Tartars who had survived the perils of the sword fell to the archers' arrows or were drowned in the Euphrates.

On Tuesday, the 5th of Ramadhān, the Sultan entered Damascus with the Caliph and his army generals to receive the warmest congratulations of his subjects.

Struggle against Innovations and Abuses

After the Tartar danger was removed, Ibn Taimiyah again occupied himself with teaching and preaching the purer spirit of religion. As stated earlier, the unhealthy influences of the Jewish and Christian cults had given rise to many heretical practices among the ignorant masses. A rock by the side of the river Qulūt in the vicinity of Damascus was held as an object of reverence by the local population where they regularly repaired to seek divine favour. Ibn Taimiyah got the rock cut to pieces under his supervision by masons and stone-cutters and thus he put an end to a heretical practice.[1]

Ibn Taimiyah always tried to prevent, by force if necessary, all accretions and innovations in religion; for, keeping the pristine purity of religion constituted the highest form of faith according to a pronouncement of the holy Prophet of Islam:

> "Whoever amongst you should see any act being committed against the dictates of the *Sharīʿah*, he should put a stop to it by force; but if he does not find it possible, he should criticise and try to reform it; and if he does not find even that much possible, he should at least hate it, although this constitutes the lowest category of faith."

It was really the business of the administrators to see that irreligious practices did not spread among the Muslims but they had no time to devote their energy to this important task. The religious doctors, too, more often than not either did not care or fought shy to oppose such accretions out of regard for the popular sentiments. Ibn Taimiyah had, therefore, taken upon

1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 34

himself the onerous responsibility of acting as a public censor of religion and morals. He had formed a society, along with his followers and students, to censor the notorious irreligion of the ignorant folk and guilty schismatics. This was a voluntary effort with no other aim except to seek the pleasure of God by making these people to observe the sacred law.

An old man who called himself Al-Mujāhid Ibrāhīm ibn al-Qattān and wore a long flamboyant quilt with long nails and hair was brought before Ibn Taimiyah in Rajab 704 A.H. on charge of being addicted to intoxicants and abusive language. He ordered his nails and hair to be trimmed and his quilt to be torn to pieces. The man was made to renounce drunkenness and revilement.[1] Another old man, Muhammad al-Khabbāz al-Balāsī, who claimed to be an interpreter of dreams and mysteries was forced by Ibn Taimiyah to give up his impious practices. However, as Ibn Kathīr reports, Ibn Taimiyah earned the displeasure of a section of population on account of these reformative activities.

Jihād against Heretics

Ibn Taimiyah had earlier accompanied al-Afram in his expedition against the heretical sects living in the hills in 699 A.H. In Zil-hijja 704 A.H. he again visited them with Zain ud-dīn ibn ʿAdnān and a large number of his friends and followers. Although his efforts to bring them back to the fold of Islam were partially successful and quite a good number of them repented from their sins, yet they remained, as a whole, indifferent to Islam. The separatist sects generally consisting of Batinites, Ismāʾilites, Hakīmites and Nusayrites had caused severe harm to the Muslims. They were the people who had invited the Crusaders and the Tartars to invade the Muslim countries, helped the invaders against Muslims, led expeditions of loot and plunder whenever they found the latter weak and defenceless and they still posed a danger to the security of the

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1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 33

surrounding areas. Ibn Taimiyah invited the attention of the Sultan towards the crimes committed by these people in a letter in which he wrote: "When the Tartar hordes had attacked Syria, these forsakers of true faith had misbehaved with the retreating Muslim forces. These very persons had been in league with the Christians of Cyprus and had helped them to capture a portion of Syria. They formed the vanguard of the Cyprian armies, trafficked in Muslim arms, horses and serfs and transferred a large number of them to Cyprus. For twenty days, they held regular bazars to sell the Muslim captives and munitions of war to the Cyprian Christians. They gleefully welcomed the Tartar invaders but when God bestowed victory to the Egyptian forces, they openly expressed their grief at the defeat of our enemies. These people had earlier conspired with Chenghīz Khān and Halākū and they were responsible for the sack of Baghdad, destruction of Haleb and Salehiya. There are, in fact, numerous other instances of perfidious and disorderly conduct to their discredit. The peace of the surrounding Muslim areas is continuously disturbed by them. They carry out nocturnal raids, ravage the Muslim habitations and commit grievous crimes against the Muslims. When Cyprians visit their lands they extend a red carpet treatment to them but no Muslim can travel safely in their country."[1]

Ibn Taimiyah headed an expedition against these schismatics for the third time which set out from Damascus on the 2nd of Muharram, 705 A. H. He was supported by a powerful army led by the governor of Syria. Inaccessible areas of Jurd inhabited by *Rawāfiz* and the hilly tracts of Tiyāmna were opened up according to a judicious plan by which the roving plunderers were completely subdued. The hilly tract had dark and impenetrable plantations which threatened every step of the invading troops with its secret snares and ambush. Ibn Taimiyah pronounced the legal opinion that the cutting down of these plantations was permissible under the *Sharīʿah* since

1. *Abū Zahra*, p. 45

similar action was taken by the Prophet in the case of Banī An-Nadhīr. "The presence of Sheikh-ul-Islam in this expedition," says Ibn Kathīr, "proved propitious. Both his erudite learning and courage provided strength to the Muslims and filled the hearts of the enemies with malice and grief."[1]

Contention of the Rafaiyah Mendicants

On 9th Jamād ul-Ūlā, 705 A.H., a group of extremist Rafāʿīyah mendicants called upon the governor of Syria and demanded that Ibn Taimiyah should be stopped from enforcing the rules of *Sharīʿah* on them. Ibn Taimiyah, on the other hand, insisted that every one would have to govern his conduct according to the principles laid down in the Scripture and the Traditions, and, whoever tried to transgress these rules, would be opposed by him. The Rafāʿīyahs also volunteered to enact certain black arts like walking on fire as a proof of their being on the righteous and divinely approved path. They claimed that their wonder-working was accepted as a mark of piety by the Tartars. Ibn Taimiyah refused their plea and remained firm on his demand with the result that the Rafāʿīyahs had to put off the iron rings worn by them. Later on Ibn Taimiyah wrote an exhaustive article delineating the history, beliefs and the practices of the Rafāʿīyah order.[2]

Opposition of Ibn Taimiyah

The way Ibn Taimiyah was trying to enforce the moral and religious principles of the *Sharīʿah* had earned him a vast following. A section of influential religious doctors, however, annoyed at Ibn Taimiyah's taking the law in his hand and jealous of his growing popularity, was looking for an opportunity to discredit him in the eyes of the administration and the people. Ibn Khathīr writes:

"A group of theologians was jealous of Sheikh Taqi

1. *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. XIV, p. 35
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, p. 36

ud-din ibn Taimiyah because of his position in the court of the governor and also for his acting as a public censor who had taken upon himself the responsibility of enforcing what was lawful and preventing what was prohibited. They were envious of his growing popularity and of the love and respect accorded to him as well as of his learning and zeal for religion."[1]

Contradiction of the 'Unity of Being'

By this time, Ibn Taimiyah was again obliged to take part in certain credal disputations. Muhi ud-din ibn ʿArabī (d. 638 A.H.) was regarded as the most respected mentor and undisputed teacher of the mystic thought. Ibn Taimiyah openly rejected his teachings expounded in *Futūhāt-i-Makkiyah* (The Meccan Revelations) and *Fusūs il-Hekam* (The Mosaic of Wisdom), which contained a rapturous discussion of the indwelling of God in the created beings and the identification of man with God. The pantheistic monism of Ibn ʿArabī attempted to square the existence of a transcendental God with a God indwelling in the world and all created, material objects which were to him nothing else than His manifestations.[2] The writings of Ibn Taimiyah show that he had carefully studied the works of Ibn ʿArabī and reached the conclusion that the pantheistic monism of Ibn ʿArabī could in no way be deemed compatible with the teachings of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.[3] He was particularly critical of Tilmisānī and Ibn Sabʿaīn, the two disciples of Ibn ʿArabī, who had failed to make any distinction between the Creator and the created. The former emphasised the negation of Divine Attributes, but preached pantheistic ideas of the union of man with God, emanation of all things from the Divine essence and, finally, the worship of all created beings. Ibn Taimiyah pointed out how some of the misguided mystics had

1. *Ibn Kathīr*, p. 37
2. *Ar-Radd al-Aqwam*, p. 11
3. *Al-Furqān*, pp. 147-48
4. *Ibid.*, p. 145

made their mystical creeds a cloak for liberation from moral restraints and a licence for practice of sensuality.[1]

The reigning monarch of Egypt and Syria, Al-Malik al-Nāsir Muhammad ibn Qalawoon had delegated all authority to Rukn ud-dīn Baibers al-Jāshangīr. The latter was a devoted disciple of Sheikh Nasar Al-Mambijī who held Ibn ʿArabī in the highest esteem as the greatest mystic of Islam. Ibn Taimiyah thus earned the displeasure of Sheikh al-Mambijī, who, as it was to be expected, misled the unphilosophic and moderately educated Turk, Baibers al-Jāshangīr, to harbour malice against Ibn Taimiyah.

Ibn Taimiyah in Egypt

Ibn Taimiyah was summoned to Egypt on the 5th of Ramadhān 705 A.H. His friends and disciples, naturally, felt worried at the summon; even the governor of Syria advised Ibn Taimiyah to wait until he got the whole affair straightened up through correspondence with the Sultan. But Ibn Taimiyah who had already decided to undertake the journey, set out for Egypt. On his way to the Capital Ibn Taimiyah delivered a sermon in the principal mosque of Gaza which was attended by a large audience.

Ibn Taimiyah Arrested and Released

Ibn Taimiyah reached Egypt on the 22nd of Ramadhān. On Friday, he was asked to attend a meeting of the theologians, jurists and the chiefs of the State held in the Fort after Friday prayers. Ibn Taimiyah stood up to address the gathering but he was asked to sit down. Then, certain persons raised objections about the dialectical issues which he had already repeatedly explained in Syria during his discourses as well as in his writings. Ibn Taimiyah again stood up to answer the charges[2] levelled

1. *Al-Radd al Aqwam,*, pp. 52-142.
2. These related to the nature and attributes of God on which Ibn Taimiyah had penned several articles and dissertations and also explained them in the debates held for the purpose.

against him but he was once more heckled down with the remark that they had not gathered to listen to his sermons. Thereupon Ibn Taimiyah asked, "Who is the Judge in my case?" He was told that it was to be decided by Qāzī Ibn Mukhlūf Mālikī. Ibn Taimiyah raised the objection: "How could he? He is my rival and adversary." Qāzī Ibn Makhlūf Mālikī got enraged and promptly pronounced the decision that he should be imprisoned. Ibn Taimiyah was accordingly kept in custody for some time in a turret and then transferred, on the night of *ʿId*, to the famous prison of Jub (the Well) alongwith his two brothers, Sharaf ud-dīn ʿAbdullāh and Zain ud-dīn ʿAbdur Rahmān.[1] Ibn Taimiyah's sympathisers, particularly the governor of Egypt and a few other theologians and legists had been trying all the while to get him released from the gaol. After full one year, on the night of *ʿId* next year (706 A.H.), he was offered to be set free provided he renounced the creed held by him. The offer was made to him as many as six times, but he always turned down the proposals saying: "The prison is dearer to me than what I am asked to affirm."[2]

Sinners and Criminals Redeemed

Ibn Taimiyah found his fellow prisoners sunk into moral disease spending their time in frolics and amusements and recreations like chess and checkerboard, without the least concern for obligatory prayers or the rules of ethical conduct. He raised his voice against these abuses, recommended temperance and discipline and inculcated the sense of piety and prayer in the prisoners. Not long after his arrival in the prison, he was successful in changing its atmosphere. The prison was turned into a monastery resounding with prayers, ejaculations and remembrance of God. A number of prisoners became his devoted disciples who, on being released, would much rather not go

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1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, page 38. Ibn Taimiyah has also given a description of his imprisonment in a letter which has been published recently.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, p. 42

back to their families but remain with him in the prison.[1]

After another four months an effort was made again to get him released from the jail. The Chief Qāzī Badr ud-dīn ibn Jamaʿah met him on the 14th of Safar, 707 A.H. but Ibn Taimiyah again refused his offer. On the 23rd of Rabʿī-ul Awwal Amīr Hosām ud-dīn Mahanā ibn ʿIsā, an Arab Chief of Syria, saw him in the prison and brought him out of it after putting him on oath. Amīr Hosām ud-dīn took him to the governor of Egypt on whose advice Ibn Taimiyah decided to remain in Egypt for some time more.

Moral Excellence

The episode of Ibn Taimiyah's arrest and release revealed his moral grit and courage. He did not bow down before the threats of tyranny, nor did he yield to the offers of worldly gains, position and riches. He rejected all offers of royal favours and privileges which he could have easily won by retracting from his stand.

But this incident also speaks of his another excellence—a nobility of character seldom to be witnessed even in those claiming the distinction of rank and blood. He forgave all those evilhearted persons who had tried to get him into trouble without giving a second thought to the whole affair. He announced that he had no grudge, no bitterness against anyone. In a letter he sent to Syria soon after his release, he says:

> "May God be pleased with you. You know that I have never wished a single Muslim to get into any trouble of any sort; then, how can I desire that my friends (scholars and theologians) should come to grief on account of me? I have no complaint, nothing to grumble against anyone; on the contrary, I have a greater love and respect for them all—for their learning and status as they verily deserve. If someone opposes another man, he is either a scholar and man of principle or an evilhearted wrong-doer and a

1. *Al-Kwākib ud-Durriyah*, p. 181

sinner. In the former case he deserves our thanks and a goodly return from God ; and, if he falls in the latter category, one needs to pray for his redemption as well as for me and all the believers. I do not want that anybody should be avenged for my sufferings or for levelling false allegations against me, for, I have already forgiven everyone of them. I desire well-being of every Muslim—the same as I desire for myself. All those persons who discredited me or deposed false evidence against me or caused trouble to me are not the least accountable so far as I am concerned ; no responsibility lies upon them on my score."[1]

Teaching and Preaching in Egypt

During his stay in Egypt, Ibn Taimiyah took up with a renewed zeal the task of explaining his view-point to the scholars and theologians. He delivered several lectures in different educational institutions, particularly in Madarsā Sālehiya in which he dwelt upon the intricate dialectical issues in the presence of select gatherings of scholars, jurists and theologians. He opposed the mystical traits showing influences of the Greco-Indian thought, exceeding the limits of Islamic spiritual dimension set by the earlier mystics or marking a break with the protecting mould of the *Sharīʿah* ; for, he quite often praised the masters of spiritual path like Sheikh ʿAbdul Qādir Jilānī and Sheikh ʿAdī ibn Musāfir Amawī in his writings and discourses. However, Ibn Taimiyah's criticism of pantheistic monism was not taken kindly in a country which had a long tradition of the neo-Platonic thought of which the poet Ibn al-Fāridh (d. 632 A.H.) had built a stately rime. A famous mystic of Egypt, Sheikh Ibn ʿAtāʾ Ullah Iskandarī,[2] brought up a case against Ibn Taimiyah in the royal court on behalf of the Egyptian mystics. A court of enquiry instituted under the royal edict heard Ibn Taimiyah's forceful exposition of his view-point and decided to

1. *Abū Zahra*, p. 62
2. The author of *Al-Hekam*, a famous treatise on mysticism.

dismiss the complaint against him. Soon after that another complaint was made against him. He was now to stand trial for the view held by him that no cry for help except to God, not even to the Prophet of Islam, was permissible under the *Sharīʿah.* The doctors of religion to whom the matter was referred could not again find fault with Ibn Taimiyah. The Chief Qāzī only remarked that Ibn Taimiyah's view savoured, if at all, some disrespect to the Prophet although it neither amounted to heresy nor sacrilege. The administration had, however, grown weary of the never-ending complaints against him and, therefore, he was asked either to return to Damascus or to go to Iskandaria (Alexandria), but in either case he was asked to comply with certain restrictions imposed on him. If none of these alternatives was acceptable to him, he was told, then he would have to return to the prison again. Ibn Taimiyah preferred the third alternative but on the insistence of his friends and disciples he agreed to return to Damascus. He set out for Syria on the 8th of Shawwāl but he was brought back the same day and sent to jail. The detention, on this occasion, was analogous to house arrest, for he was allowed the services of an attendant and anybody could come to see him. Shortly thereafter Ibn Taimiyah was set free on a unanimous request made by the theologians and jurists.

Ibn Taimiyah again in Trouble :

Suddenly there was political change in Egypt which made the matters worse for him. Nāsir ibn Qalawoon abdicated and went away to Kirk, leaving Baibers al-Jāshangīr, as the undisputed ruler of Egypt and Syria. Ibn Taimiyah had been respected by the outgoing Monarch since the days of his close association with him during the Tartar war. Now, considered an enemy of the new ruler, he was also despised by Sheikh Nasr al-Mambijī, the spiritual mentor of Baibers al-Jāshangīr and a zealous defender of the doctrine of pantheistic monism. A royal edict for the exile and internment of Ibn Taimiyah in Iskandaria was issued in the month of Safar, 709 A.H. Ibn Taimiyah, how-

ever, did not sit idle even in these unfavourable conditions and his forceful elucidation of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* soon earned for him a respectable place in the literary circles of Iskandaria.[1] The city of Ibn Taimiyah's internment was a stronghold of the Sabᶜīniyah order of mystics. Pantheistic cult of the sect preached emancipation from the ritual of Islam ; its diffusion among the masses had led thousands of reckless and profligate spirits to enter upon the path of error. Ibn Taimiyah launched a powerful movement against the Sabᶜīniyah order and within his short stay of eight months in Iskandaria, he was successful in winning back a large number of its adherents to the moral law of the *Sharīᶜah*.[2]

Dawnfall of Baibers al-Jāshangir

As already predicted by Ibn Taimiyah, the rule of Baibers al-Jāshangīr came to an end within a year of his assuming the imperial purple. Nāsir ibn Qalawoon first established himself in Syria by gaining control over Damascus, without any resistance, on the 13th of Shᶜābān, 709 A.H. Then he advanced towards Egypt where too he found a ready support from the elite and the masses. Baibers al Jāshangir abdicated and Ibn Qalawoon entered Cairo on the day of *ᶜId* that year. Al-Jāshangir fled to Syria where he was captured and executed by the governor of Syriā on the 7th of Zil Qaᶜada, 709 A.H.

Baibers al-Jāshangīr was an able and popular prime minister but no sooner had he ascended the throne than his eminence and authority began to peter out. "He was virtuous, temperate, modest and dignified" writes the annalist of Egypt, al-Maqrizī, "but from the moment he assumed the title of Sultan and ascended the throne, his glory and eminence began to melt away and he was taken as a weak ruler. The people began to make bold and the grandees as well as his slaves became defiant.

1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 50
2. Letter of Sheikh Sharf ud-dīn ibn Taimiyah to the people of Damascus and *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. XIV, p. 50.

Unsuccessful in achieving his aims, he soon came to grief; his rule came to an end and he breathed his last."[1]

Who knows that his unexpected downfall was not a punishment inflicted by Providence for the unjust persecution of a blessed soul!

Release of Ibn Taimiyah

Sheikh ᶜAlam ud-din al-Barzālī, a contemporary of Ibn Taimiyah, says that when Sultān Qalawoon entered Egypt on the day of ᶜ*Id*, the anxiety uppermost in his mind was to bring back Ibn Taimiyah. Accordingly, the royal summons to bring him back reached Iskandaria the next day and he departed from the city on the 8th of Shawwāl. A large crowed in Iskandaria had gathered to bid farewell to him.

The king and his courtiers came out of the royal chamber to receive Ibn Taimiyah. After warm greetings extended to Ibn Taimiyah by all, the king took him to the inner chamber where the two remained alone for some time.[2]

Ibn Taimiyah later told Qāzī Jamāl ud-dīn ibn al-Qalānisī that when he was alone with the Sultan, the latter solicited his consent for the execution of all those jurists who had sided with Al-Jāshangīr. The Sultan showed him the legal verdicts given by these persons in favour of Al-Jāshangīr and said that these very persons were responsible for his own sufferings. Ibn Taimiyah adds that as soon as he came to know of the Sultan's intention, he began praising those jurists and told the Sultan that if these jurists were put to sword there would be nobody to replace them. The Sultan, however, again said that these persons had left no stone unturned to put Ibn Taimiyah to the most grievous harm. To this, Ibn Taimiyah replied that he had already forgiven them. He had, therefore, no claim upon them. Ibn Taimiyah kept on urging the Sultan until he promised to pardon the offending jurists.[3]

1. *Khutat Misr*, Vol. II, p. 418
2. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 54
3. *Ibid.*

Ibn Kathīr relates on the authority of Qāzī Ibn Makhlūf, one of the bitterest enemies of Ibn Taimiyah, that he had not seen a man more large-hearted than him. Ibn Makhlūf confessed to Ibn Kathīr that he had always tried to instigate and provoke the administration to take action against Ibn Taimiyah, but the latter, when his turn came, not only forgave his misdeeds but also pleaded his defence.

Ibn Taimiyah again turned to the pursuits of teaching and reformative endeavour. A number of his adversaries expressed regret for their past behaviour, who were all promptly acquitted of their previous enmity by Ibn Taimiyah, but a few still continued to harbour a grudge against him. However, as they found it difficult to say anything openly against Ibn Taimiyah, they started to malign him among the ignorant masses and instigated them to raise a tumult against him. Their efforts bore fruit and on the 4th of Rajab 711 A.H. a few persons, evil-minded and wicked in spirit, manhandled and caused bodily injuries to him. Soon a large crowd gathered to take revenge on his behalf, but Ibn Taimiyah firmly forbade them to take any action. "There are only three alternatives", said he, "and the first is that I have a claim upon them. This I forgo, and declare that they are released from every claim that I may have upon them. If you have a claim against them and you do not also want to listen to me, then do whatever you please. And, if God has that claim, He shall have His due whenever He likes."

On another occasion a theologian fulminated against him in a gathering, but, on having second thoughts later on, apologised to him. Ibn Taimiyah immediately forgave him saying "I never take revenge."[1]

Ibn Taimiyah did not confine his activities only to the instruction of his disciples or propagation of the teachings of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. He also tendered advice to the Sultān and got some important reforms introduced in Egypt and Syria. A royal edict sent to Damascus in 712 A.H. prohibited

1. *Abū Zahra*, p. 74

appointments to public offices being made on monetary considerations for the practice encouraged dishonest persons to hold these posts for minting money out of them. Another order issued by the Sultān forbade unauthorised retaliatory action against a person charged with manslaughter. The culprits were ordered to be arrested and impeached in accordance with the law. Ibn Kathīrsays that both these orders were issued by the Sultan on the advice of Ibn Taimiyah.[1]

Ibn Taimiyah returns to Damascus

Reports of renewed Tartar efforts to invade Syria reached Egypt in Shawwāl, 712 A.H. The Sultān himself advanced to meet the threat; he left the capital on the 8th of Shawwāl and arrived at Damascus on the 23rd of that month. Ibn Taimiyah also accompanied the Sultan. In Damascus, he was given a rousing reception by the citizens. Ibn Taimiyah had come with the intention of participating in the holy war against the Tartars, but on reaching Damascus he came to know that the invading Tartar army had retired. He went to Jerusalem with the intention of visiting Bait-ul-Muqaddas. He returned to Damascus after completing the pilgrimage on the 1st of Zil Qaᶜada.

Attention paid to Juristic Issues

Ibn Taimiyah again got himself busy, on his return to Damascus, in the intellectual and religious pursuits, but there was a difference this time in his literary engagements. Earlier he had paid more attention to the scholastical issues relating to the cult and creed, which were the subject of a lively deliberation between the Ashᶜarites and Hanbalites, but now he devoted his thoughts to the juristic problems. It seems that Ibn Taimiyah felt that the dialectical problems did not require his attention any more for he had clearly expounded its contentious issues in his earlier speeches and writings.

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1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 66

Ibn Taimiyah was a Hanbalite like his forefathers, and most of the legal opinions given by him conformed to that school, but he did not follow the Hanbalite school exclusively. Of a truth, no scholar of Ibn Taimiyah's compass of mind, having an insight into the teachings of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* as well as the objectives, principles and rules of their application evolved by the earlier juristic schools, could possibly remain a blind follower of any particular juristic school. In specific matters, therefore, he preferred the school which more appealed to reason or which he found upheld by a greater number of the Prophet's companions and their successors. But, in spite of his erudition and intelligence, he always praised the profound knowledge, creative thought, honesty and piety of the precursors of all the juristic schools, whom he regarded as scholars correctly basing their rules of interpretations on the principles of the Qur'ān, the *sunnah*, *ijmʿā* and *qiyās*. He never liked those who sought to destory or discard what previous generations had built up, nor he favoured those who showed disrespect to the earlier *Imāms*.[1]

The Question of Three Talāqs

Just as Ibn Taimiyah often rejected the Hanbalite view, in a few cases he drew up his statement of legal position disagreeing with all the four principal juristic schools. In these cases too he claims to have inferred directly from the express laws of the Scripture and the Traditions. One such case in which he differed with all the other juristic schools related to the repudiation of one's wife by three sentences of divorce, all given at a time.

The question was whether a divorce thus pronounced thrice at a time, although offending the law as well as irregular and

1. Ibn Taimiyah wrote *Rafʿal Malām ʿAnil Ayʿimmatil ʿĀlām* to show that the founders of all the four juristice schools were men of piety who endeavoured to expound the *Sharīʿah* in the light of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* according to their own lights.

sinful according to all juristic schools and the consensus of the Muslims, took legal effect or not? The issues this question raised were whether revocation of such a divorce was possible or not; whether the three sentences of divorce would be reckoned as one revocable pronouncement or taken as an irreversible separation; and whether the wife so divorced could return to her husband or not without *halālah* (i.e. until the divorced wife was married to another man, the marriage was consummated and then divorced by the second husband)? All the earlier jurists and Traditionists, such as Auzāʿī, Nakhʿee, Thaurī, Is'hāq ibn Rahūwaih, Abū Thaur, Bukhārī, as also a majority of the Prophet's companions and their descendants had held the view that such a pronouncement, however sinful and heterodox, would sufficiently amount to an implied divorce taking legal effect. This view found support from several Traditions of the Prophet in which he had held all the three sentences of such a divorce as separate pronouncements and ordered the wife to be irreversibly divorced.[1]

Ibn Taimiyah and some of his friends and disciples, on the contrary, held that the three sentences of divorce should be regarded as one revocable divorce. He formulated this view on the basis of the Qur'ān, the Traditions and analogy and gave sufficiently weighty reasons in support of his view-point.[2]

Divorce by Swearing

There was another form of divorce in which Ibn Taimiyah held a view different from all other jurists and which had had an important bearing upon the relationship between the then governments and the people.

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1. *Fatāwah Ibn Taimiyah*, Vol. III, p. 38
2. Contrary to the views held by other jurists Ibn Taimiyah proved that the Traditions of the holy Prophet on which others based their legal opinion were not of unimpeachable veracity in accordance with accepted canons of criticism. For fuller discussion on the subject see *Zād-ul-Maʿad* by Ibn Qayyim and *Ighāthatallahfān*.

A common form of divorce, in those days, was to asseverate one's veracity or will to do a thing under oath on the penalty of divorcing one's wife. Its common form was to say to one's wife: "I shall do (or not do) this, otherwise you will be divorced." During the governorship of Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf, the oath of fealty made to the ruler was also linked with it which stipulated that in the case of breaking that oath the separation from one's wife would also automatically take place.

In response to a request for a statement on the juristic position of such divorces, Ibn Taimiyah expressed the legal opinion that such a declaration constituted a simple oath affirming to do or not to do a thing; and where a swearer failed in its fulfilment, expiation was incumbent on him, but the failure did not take the legal effect of separation between him and his wife. Ibn Taimiyah cited in his support the legal opinions of certain earlier jurists,[1] but his view deviated from the consensus of juristic verdicts on the point. This, naturally, caused vexation among the theologians who tried to forbid Ibn Taimiyah from expressing legal opinions in such cases. "On Tuesday, the fifth of Rabʿī-ul-Awwal", writes Ibn Kathīr under the annals of 718 A. H., "the Chief Qāzī Shams ud-din ibn Muslim met Ibn Taimiyah and advised him not to express his legal opinions on cases pertaining to divorces by swearing which might be referred to him. The Sheikh accepted his advice and promised to act likewise in deference to the wishes of the Chief Qāzī and other jurists. Then, in the beginning of Jumāda-ul-Ūla, a royal edict was received from Cairo which prohibited Ibn Taimiyah from giving legal opinions in such cases. The royal mandate was read out in a gathering and Ibn Taimiyah promised to abide by it."[2] Thereafter, it seems, Ibn Taimiyah reconsidered the matter and reached the conclusion that the administration had no right to interfere in this matter, nor was it proper for him to desist from expressing what he believed to be right for fear of

1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 87
2. *Abū Zahra*, pp. 436-37

government. Accordingly, he again started giving legal opinions in these cases. On Tuesday, the 22nd of Rajab, 720 A. H., a council of theologians and jurists was convened by the governor of Syria to consider the complaint against Ibn Taimiyah. It was decided to detain him in the citadel where he was transferred the same day. He remained in this preventive detention for five months and eighteen days and was released, on the orders received directly from Cairo, on the 10th of Muharram, 721 A. H.[2]

The Last Imprisonment

For about five and a half years between 721 A. H. to 726 A. H., Ibn Taimiyah devoted himself again to the teaching in Madrasa Hanbalia and his own *madrasa* in Qassasin, pouring forth his encyclopaedic knowledge. He also revised some of his older works. His ready pen would have, perhaps, produced some more classical works but his intellectual brilliance and pre-eminent individuality which tended to overshadow his contemporaries was a constant cause of trouble for him.

Ibn Taimiyah had expressed a legal opinion, seventeen years back, that no journey to a shrine, even if it be to the grave of the Holy Prophet of Islam could be undertaken as an act of devotion under the *Sharīʿah*. He had based his opinion on the Tradition which said: "Do not saddle a dormedary except for three mosques, the Masjid-i-Harām (Kaʿaba), my own Mosque (the Prophet's Mosque) and the Masjid-i-Aqsā (Bait-ul-Muqaddas[3])." Ibn Taimiyah had explained how the pilgrimage to shrines of saints opened the door to ascribing divine powers to the saints and performance of ceremonies which imply reliance on beings other than God. In his support he had cited several other Traditions of the Prophet saying: "The curse of God be on the Jews and Christians who have turned

1. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 87
2. *Ibid.*, p. 97
3. In Jerusalem

the graves of their prophets into places of worship,"[1] or, "O Allah, do not make an idol of my grave that it may be worshipped."[2]

The enemies of Ibn Taimiyah unearthed this seventeen year old statement of legal opinion to discredit him among the ignorant folk. It was given wide publicity in order to injure the susceptibilities of the masses, on the one hand, who considered it an act of great merit to visit the Prophet's grave, and to enlist the support of the theologians, on the other, against a man at odds with their unanimous view. This did have the desired effect as the feelings of the masses were stirred up to an extent that the administration felt obliged to intervene in the matter. The order to put him again behind the bars was issued on the 7th of Shʿabān, 726 A. H. When the news was communicated to Ibn Taimiyah, he said, "I was looking forward to it. It has a lot of goodness and grace for me."

Ibn Taimiyah was taken to the Damascus citadel. A subsistence allowance was fixed for him and his brother Zain ud-dīn ʿAbdur Rahmān ibn Taimiyah was allowed to remain with him.

Detention of Ibn Taimiyah was a victory achieved by his adversaries. His friends and disciples were manhandled and some of them were even ordered to be cast into prison. They were all released after a few days, but Hāfiz ibn Qaiyyim, one of the devoted disciples of Ibn Taimiyah, remained with his mentor in detention till his death.[3]

Protest by the Scholars

Imprisonment of Ibn Taimiyah was a source of satisfaction to his enemies, but it saddened the hearts of a large number of scholars and doctors of religion as well as the majority of the Muslims in Syria and other countries. Numerous appeals were made and petitions preferred to the Sultān urging him to release

1. *Bukhāri* and *Muslim*
2. *Musnad Imām Ahmad*
3. *Abū Zahra*, p. 84

the Sheikh. The petitions submitted to the Sultān from every part of the realm and from the far-flung lands of the Islamic world show the extent of popularity and respect Ibn Taimiyah enjoyed among the people One such petition sent by the scholars of Baghdad to the Sultān expressed deep concern and the sorrowful gloom overtaking the intellectual circles and the orthodox Muslims of eastern countries, particularly Iraq, and the gleeful mirth exhibited by the heretics and non-conformists over Ibn Taimiyah's internment.[1] A number of religious doctors even sent their own legal opinions in support of the stand taken by Ibn Taimiyah.

Ibn Taimiyah's Preoccupations in the Citadel

The internment of the Sheikh, however, provided him, after a long time, the much needed repose and rest which he fully utilised in prayers and literary endeavours. He completed, along with his brother Zain ud-dīn ʿAbdur Rahmān, eighty recitals of the Qur'ān during that short period.[2]

The greater part of Ibn Taimiyah's writings during the period of detention consisted of exegesis of the Qur'ān which shows that the time left by recitals of the holy Scripture was spent in pondering over the Quranic verses. He also wrote a few monographs explaining certain specific issues which were referred to him by the scholars. He was thus enabled to carry on his literary activities undisturbed during the initial period of his last detention, except, of course, the sermons which he used to deliver for the benefit of the people.

Further Restrictions

The writings of Ibn Taimiyah were taken out of the gaol and their copies sent to scholars in every part of the country. Among the treatises and monographs written by him during this period, one lengthy dissertation was indited on pilgrimage which

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1. *Al Kawākib ud-Durriyah.* p. 198 and *Al ʿUqūd ud-Durriyah* p. 350
2. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 138

he wrote in reply to an article of a Mālikite Qāzī ʿAbdullāh Ibn al-Akhnāʾī. Ibn Taimiyah showed at length how ignorant and unlearned the Qāzī was.[1] Thereupon ʿAbdullah ibn al-Akhnāʾī lodged another complaint in the royal court against Ibn Taimiyah which resulted in the issue of another decree ordering that every book, paper and pen should be taken away from him.

The royal edict confiscated all the books and writing material possessed by Ibn Taimiyah on the 9th of Jamada-ul-Ukharā, 728 A.H. On the first of the following Rajab, even the manuscripts and loose sheets of paper were taken away from him and kept in the library of Judiciary.[2]

Writings by Charcoal

Ibn Taimiyah neither protested nor even showed any resentment over this attempt to shackle his pen. After the ink and pen were taken away, he used to write with charcoal on loose sheets of such paper as he could lay his hands on. Some of these writings were found later on and preserved for a long time. He seemed to have reconciled himself to his fate and accepted the inevitable without repining and regarded his tribulations as trials and sufferings of fighters in the way of God. Expressing the same feeling in a letter he wrote. "Thank God that we are now engaged in a fight in the way of God. The battle we are fighting here is not a bit lower in order than our previous warfare against Ghazān, the heretics of the hills and the propagators of pantheistic monism. This is undoubtedly a blessing of God on us, although most of the people are not aware of it"[3].

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1. *See Al-Akhnāʾiyah*
2. The building now houses the office of *Al-Majmʿa ul-Ilmi-ul-ʿArbi*. This was the place where Ibn Khallikān wrote his famous *Wafayāt al-ʿAyān* and lectures were delivered by Ibn Mālik who later wrote *Al-Fīh*. The material confiscated from Ibn Taimiyah, under the Royal edict, comprised 60 books and 14 folios of his maniscript.
3. *Abū Zahra*

Serene Resignation .

His serene contentment and calm submission to the will of God bespeaks of the faith delivered unto the saints. "The grace and blessings of God", wrote Ibn Taimiyah in another letter, "lie in what God decides for His bondsmen. Verily, He is the strong, the Dominant, the Wise and the Knower. Man is put to harm only by his own sins, for, says God : 'Whatever of good befalleth thee (O man) it is from Allah and whatever of ill befalleth thee it is from thyself.'[1] Therefore, it is incumbent on man to be thankful to God and praise Him ever and anon, and seek forgiveness for his sins from the cradle to the grave. For benediction to God brings His grace and blessings, supplication for Divine forgiveness averts His wrath and punishment. Whatever God ordains for His bondsman, it is always the best for him. The Prophet of God is reported to have said[2] : 'If prosperity attends a believer, he is thankful (to Allah) ; and if adversity befalls him, he is patient and it is good for him."

But Ibn Taimiyah was also convinced that he was without reproach : the only fault he owned was that he did not yield obedience to the authorities in a religious matter in which he considered himself to be just and right. He acknowledged his intractability, if it could be so named ; but, far from being sorry for the shortcoming, he considered it the harvest of his conviction in the Unity of God. In yet another letter written by him from the jail he says : "Their greatest charge against me is that the orders given by a man were disregarded by me. But, if the order given by a human being, whether he be a master or king, contravenes the commandments of God and His Prophet, then that should never be obeyed. On the contrary, the entire Muslim community is agreed on the view that no obedience is permissible in anything opposed to an express mandate of God and the Prophet."

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1. Q. IV : 79
2. *Muslim*, on the authority of Suhaib ibn Sinan

The Last Days

Zain ud-din ʿAbdur Rahmān relates that after completing eighty recitals of the Qur'ān, Ibn Taimiyah started it again with him. However, when he reached the closing verses of the *Sūrah al-Qamar*—Lo! the righteous will dwell among gardens and rivers firmly established in the favour of a Mighty King[1]—he expressed his desire to continue the recital further with ʿAbdullah ibn Muhīb and his brother ʿAbdullāh az-Zaraʿee. Both these brothers were pious and pure of heart, and their recital was very much liked by Ibn Taimiyah. But he had not completed this recital of the Qur'ān when the knell summoning him to heaven was sounded.

The Sheikh had been indisposed for a few days when the governor of Damascus called upon him. On his request to pardon him for the inconvenience caused on his account, Ibn Taimiyah replied: "I have already forgiven you and all those persons who have been hostile to me. They knew not that I was in the right. I bear no malice nor have I any grievance against the King for putting me in jail at the instance of the theologians. He did not do it of his own accord and is free from all responsibility in this regard. I have pardoned every man in this affair except those who are enemies of God and His Prophet."

Ibn Taimiyah was taken ill twenty-two days before his death. His health gradually dwindled till the journey's end drew near in the night of the twenty second of Zil-Qaʿada, 728 A.H., when he quit this world at the age of 67 years. "Everyone that is thereon will pass away; there remaineth but the Countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory."[2]

The crier of the citadel mosque announced the death of Ibn Taimiyah from the minaret, which was repeated by the guards in the turrets and soon it spread in the city like wild fire. The gates of the fort were thrown open to allow wave after wave of teeming crowd coming to pay its last homage to the departed

1. Q. LIV: 54-55
2. Q. LV: 26-27

teacher. Many of them kissed, with tears brimming in their eyes, the forehead that frequently remained prostrated before the Lord.

The bier was brought to the Ummayyad Mosque for funeral service. The thronging crowd which was getting stronger every moment was so great that the army had to force its way into it for carrying the bier with great difficulty. In the vast multitude jostling and pushing to get near the bier many lost their shoes. At last the procession ended in Sūq-al-Khaīl where another funeral service was led by his younger brother Zain ud-dīn ʿAbdur Rahmān. After the service, Ibn Taimiyah was laid at rest in Maqbartis-Sūfiyah[1] by the side of his brother Sharaf ud-dīn ʿAbdullah. It is estimated that a train of 60,000 to 1,00,000 persons of which at least 15,000 were women joined the funeral procession.[2]

In several Islamic countries lying to the south and east of Syria funeral services were held in absentia for Ibn Taimiyah. Ibn Rajab, a chronicler who wrote *Tabqāt-ul-Hanābilah*, says that the funeral services were held in several nearer and far off lands like Yeman and China. "The funeral service of an expositor of the Qur'ān will now be held," was the announcement made after Friday prayers in a far off city according to the travellers returning from China.

1. In this burial ground where such luminaries as Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn us-Salāh, Ibn al-Athīr, Abul Hajjāj Al-Mizzī, Hāfiz Imād ud-din Ibn Kathīr were buried, only the grave of Ibn Taimiyah now remains in an open space before the Hall of the University of Syria and the Hospital.

2. *Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. XIV, p. 136-39

IV

Character and Achievements

Intellectual Brilliance

Ibn Taimiyah occupied a pride of place among his contemporary scholars and doctors of religion, theologians and legists who had all to acknowledge, without any exception, his superlative merits in every branch of learning. This was not due to his fire of genius alone but also because of his marvellous retentive memory which was, indeed, a God-given gift granted to a few beneath the heavens. By Ibn Taimiyah's time, the religious sciences had been vastly developed and encyclopaedic literature had been accumulated on scores of its branches. No scholar could, without a prodigious memory, claim mastery over the whole of it, much less sit in judgement over the thoughts and findings of the savants in every field of knowledge. But the remarkable treasure house of Ibn Taimiyah's mind enabled him to have at his finger tips the whole of the then extant literature on exegesis, Traditions, jurisprudence, dogmatic theology, scholasticism, history, biography, lexicography and syntax. He could always utilize this store-house of knowledge in his thrilling career of intellectual and literary pursuits.

His contemporaries and successors both are agreed that he possessed a wonderful memory, nimble mind, quick grasp and a radiant flame of intellect. One of his classmates, ʿAlam ud-dīn al-Barzālī, says that "he enshrined in his memory whatever he heard, rarely anything faded from his mind and, intelligent as

he was, he had a wide knowledge."[1] Shams ud-dīn al-Zahabī, the famous historian and biographer has avouched that he has not seen "a man more adept than Ibn Taimiyah who could rehearse the Traditions so correctly (with the correct wordings and the narrative chains), recall these at the appropriate time and cite the correct references."[2] Everyone conversant with the science of Traditions knows how difficult it is to learn by heart the entire literature on Traditions. But, strange though it may seem, no contemporary scholar of Ibn Taimiyah, not even his bitterest critics, ever disputed the testimony of al-Zahabī who said: "It can truly be claimed that no Tradition would be acceptable if Ibn Taimiyah pleaded ignorance of it."[3] Kamāl ud-dīn ibn az-Zamalkānī disagreed with Ibn Taimiyah on many issues and had figured against him in several polemical disputations. Once he acknowledged that "no man of such prodigious memory has been born in the last four or five hundred years."[4] To quote al-Zahabī again, Ibn Taimiyah was "a flame of intellect" and "a marvel of sparkling intelligence and a sharp wit."[5]

Encyclopaedic Knowledge

Ibn Taimiyah had so completely assimilated all the knowledge of his time that even the talented doctors in different fields of learning were amazed to see his mastery in their own sciences. A number of eminent scholars have paid glowing tributes to Ibn Taimiyah. Taqī ud-dīn Ibn Daqīq ul-ᶜId occupies a distinguished place among the teachers of Traditions. His impression, after Ibn Taimiyah met him in Egypt in 700 A.H. was: "I felt that he had all the sciences before his eyes; he called up whatever he liked and left whatever he wanted."[6]

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1. *Ar-Radd ul-Wāfir*, p. 66
2. *Al-Qaul-il-Jalī*, p. 101
3. *Al-Kawākib ud-Durriyah*, p. 145
4. *Ibid* p. 145
5. *Ar-Radd-ul-Wāfir*, p. 29
6. *Ibid* p. 31

Kamāl ud-dīn ibn az-Zamalkānī was a renowned scholar in several sciences. Expressing his astonishment over Ibn Taimiyah's agility of mind he says, "When he is asked anything, his reply gives the impression that he has spent his whole life in acquiring the knowledge of that very science alone and there is none else who can equal him in that branch of learning."[1] Taqī ud-dīn ibn al-Subkī, one of Ibn Taimiyah's rivals who had written many books to confute Ibn Taimiyah's views on certain juristic issues, wrote in his letter to al-Zahabī: "I am fully aware that Ibn Taimiyah is an erudite scholar, his knowledge is profound and deep in all the religious and secular sciences; he is mature in thought and sparkling in intellect, and I also know that his scholarship is beyond all praise. I have always acknowledged these qualities of Ibn Taimiyah before my friends and associates."[2]

Ibn Taimiyah was not a student of history. However, his competence in this field too was acknowledged by a historian like Shams ud-dīn al-Zahabī in these words: "His knowledge of history is remarkably astonishing." Ibn Qayyim has left an account of Ibn Taimiyah's amazing proficiency in this field as well as sharpness of mind. He writes in *Zād ul-Maᶜād* that once the Jews (of either Syria or Iraq) produced as scroll of crumbling paper with a writing in the old script which showed that the Prophet had exempted the Jews of Khaibar from the payment of *Jizyah* (poll-tax). The document had the signatures of ᶜAlī, Saᶜad ibn Maᶜāz and a number of other companions of the Prophet as witnesses. Certain scholars, not so well-versed in history, accepted it as a genuine document and gave the decision that the Jews should be exempted from the payment of poll-tax. But when the document was shown to Ibn Taimiyah he at once declared it to be a fake document and gave as many as ten reasons for holding that opinion. Some of the reasons given by Ibn Taimiyah for declaring the document as spurious were that it had

1. *Ar-Radd ul-Wāfir* p. 30
2. *Tabqāt-ış-Shāfeᶜiyah*

the signature of Saᶜad ibn Maᶜaz but he had died before the battle of Khaibar; there could be no question of any exemption from the poll-tax because the Quranic verses imposing the tax were revealed in the year of Tabūk i.e. three years after the battle of Khaibar was fought. The exemption of the Jews from forced labour, a mention of which was made in the document, was absurd for the Prophet or his companions neither considered it lawful under the *Sharīᶜāh* nor they ever subjected anybody to forced labour; and, lastly, no historian, Traditionist or legist had made a mention of the document in question in his writings."[1]

Another story of his nimble wit and facility of poetization has been told by Saleh Tāj ud-dīn. He says that once a Jew brought a question about fate in the form of eight verses. Ibn Taimiyah read the verses, pondered over the question for a few seconds and then started writing its reply. When he had completed the reply it was found that he had composed 184 verses in the same metre and rhyme in which the question had been indited. Saleh Tāj ud-dīn adds that Ibn Taimiyah's verses were so profound that a commentary on them would have filled two copious volumes.[2]

Ibn Taimiyah's great store of knowledge has been acclaimed by his contemporary and succeeding scholars with such complimentary remarks as "The Master Spirit of the Age," "The Crown of Scholars," "Last of the Enlightened scholars," and "A Sign among the Signs of God." Ibn Saiyid-in-Nās (d. 734 A.H.) says that 'his contemporaries did not see another man like him, nor did he himself witness his peer."[3] Similarly, Shams ud-dīn al-Zahabī testifies: "If I were asked to testify before the Kaᶜaba I will swear by God that neither I saw a scholar like him nor did he himself see a man of his stature."

Dauntless Courage

The Turk chiefs and military generals were amazed to see

1. *Zād ul-Maᶜād*, Vol. I, p. 336
2. *Al-Kawākib ad-Durriyah*, p. 154
3. *Ibid.*

the dauntless valour of Ibn Taimiyah which he had shown against the Mongols on the battle-field. "Seated on the horse-back," says Hāfiz Sirāj ud-dīn, "he assumed his station in the front line like a brave soldier and flew at the enemy ranks as if he had no fear."[1] The remarkable courage shown by him against the kings and rulers in raising the voice of truth was undoubtedly the outcome of an still deeper, spiritual and enduring element of his character. Many scholars before him had expounded the issues he touched upon, but the singular courage and fearlessness exhibited by him in explaining the true content of the Unity of Godhead and placing one's trust in Him alone as against the innovation of sūfīstic ideas like pantheistic monism or union and absorption into the Absolute Being or other aberrations of the misguided sects, and the way he endured all adversities patiently and steadfastly show the fortitude and grit of his mind and character. Paying a glowing tribute to this brave, venturesome characteristic of Ibn Taimiyah, al-Zahabi writes : "None amongst his predecessors and successors dared to explain his view-point so forcefully as did Ibn Taimiyah and the result was that a large number of theologians of Egypt and Syria became his enemy. His adversaries left no stone unturned to humiliate and discredit him. They charged him with innovation, joined issues with him and wrote treatises to confute him, but he remained steadfast against all odds and difficulties. He resisted all temptations and remained firm on what he considered to be right and correct. The conclusions he had reached were not only the result of his own ponderings and wide knowledge of the Scripture and Traditions but also a product of his piety, fear of God and deference to the ordinances of the *Sharīah*. On many an occasion he had to face the combined antipathy of opposing scholars, but he was always helped by God to emerge unhurt from the vindictive wrath of his opponents."[2]

1. *Al-Kwākib ud-Durriyah*, p. 161
2. *Ar-Radd-ul-Wāfir*, p. 67

The comprehensive knowledge and intellectual brilliance of Ibn Taimiyah had been acknowledged by his contemporaries, friends and foes both, but the secret of his greatness and immortal fame lay in his inquiring mind, coherent thought and ability to chart an untrodden course for himself. No scholar before him had dared to point out the mistakes of Sibawaih, the undisputed authority on grammar and syntax, as he did. Greek philosophy had so powerfully captured the minds of the scholars and doctors of religion that even its greatest critic, Imām Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, had not succeeded in completely shaking off the influence of Greek metaphysics and ethics in his famous work *Ihyā' ul-ʿUloom.*[1] But Ibn Taimiyah's writings do not show the slightest trace of compromise with the Greek philosophy and its way of thinking. In *Kitāb ur-Radd-i-ʿalal Mantaqīyīn* his criticism of the logical syllogism smashes the entire structure of Greek philosophy from which it had been borrowed. In Traditions and jurisprudence too, the scholars never dared to discuss any issue except within the limits set by the earlier teachers, but Ibn Taimiyah had the courage to re-open many issues which had by then been taken as decided once for all. He fearlessly presented his findings with cogent reasoning couched in a literary style, which stirred the stagnant thought of his time. At last, he raised himself above the four orthodox juristic schools and began to base his legal opinions only on the Scripture, the Traditions of the Prophet and the practice of the companions. "For the last few years", says al-Zahabī, "he is not giving his legal opinions in accordance with any recognised juristic school, but stands by what he considers to be right. He has set forth a series of such reasons and proofs, as none else had done earlier, which uphold the correctness of following the precepts of the Prophet and the earliest followers of Islam."[2]

It is natural for man to err, and Ibn Taimiyah too was at

1. For a fuller discussion see *Falāsafatul Ikhlāq fil Islām wa Silātuhā bil Falsafatil Ighriqiāh* and *Tarīkh-i-Akhlāq* by Dr. Muhammad Yūsuf Mūsā.
2. *Ar-Radd-ul-Wāfir*, p. 17

fault in some of his 'unique' opinions; but there is not the least doubt about his sincerity. He never blindly followed any *Imām* nor gave up the opinion of the founder of any juristic school either on account of false pretence, inertia or sluggishness, vanity or expediency. He was always disposed to act with careful regard to what was right and enjoined by the Book of God and Traditions of the Prophet. The character of Ibn Taimiyah can best be summed up in the words of Ibn Hajar ʿAsqalānī which is worth repeating here. He says that "Ibn Taimiyah was without doubt the Saint of saints. Even in matters in which he was censured, he did not form his opinion out of arrogance. He insisted on his opinion only when he was satisfied about its correctness. In all those numerous matters in which his opinion has been accepted as correct, one ought to avail oneself of his wisdom and raise his hands in prayer for the peace of his soul. One need not follow him where he is mistaken, but he cannot be reproached even in those matters. All the erudite scholars of his time have affirmed that he had attained that position of scholarship and learning which enables a man to formulate juristic opinions. Even Sheikh Jamāl ud-dīn az-Zamalkānī, who was his bitterest enemy always trying to put him to harm, has acknowledged the erudition of Ibn Taimiyah."[1]

Furtherance of the cause of true faith was all his business, from morn till eve. He had no other occupation, no vocation, which could divert his attention from the remembrance of God and service of his fellow beings—neither a trade to ply, nor dependants to engage his attention he ever had.

Ibn Taimiyah's engagement in literary pursuits and devotion to God so engaged his attention that he never thought of accepting the responsibilities of a married life. He busied himself in giving legal opinions and helping others to solve their problems since early morning until the time arrived for offering mid-day prayer. He spent the whole day in that manner and

1. *Ar-Radd-ul-Wāfir*, p. 78

taught the students until it was quite late in the night. In between these engagements, he would keep himself busy in recollection of God, in praising Him and in seeking His forgiveness.[1]

Acquisition of knowledge was the other errand in which Ibn Taimiyah continuously kept himself employed. "It seems", says Sirāj ud-dīn Abū Hafs al-Bazzār, "that study and edification had become his mood and mental aptitude, dwelling in him and pervading all bis actions.[2]

Ibn Taimiyah's sincerity and honesty of purpose is apparent from the fact that on every occasion when his enemies caused him trouble and distress, he was generous enough to declare: "I acquit every Muslim accountable for the troubles caused to me." The way he forgave Qāzī Ibn Makhlūf and insisted on Sultan Qalawoon to pardon all those theologians and jurists who had earlier opposed him speaks volumes of his largeheartedness and nobility of disposition. Always scrupulously careful to adhere to that which was manifestly true and right even in thought, his differences of opinion with other doctors of religion were always because of disagreement on religious and intellectual issues and never owing to personal acrimony. And, indeed, it was only on account of his unimpeachable honesty of purpose and uprightness that he was enabled to bequeath, within the span of 67 years from birth to death, which was full of restlessness and mentally tiring activities, anxiety and anguish caused by his adversaries, and adverse fortune and untoward events brought by destiny, a store of encyclopaedic literature which was enough to gain recognition not for one but several erudite scholars.[3] He profoundly altered through his sincerity,

1. *Al-Kawākib ud-Durriyah*, p. 156
2. *Ibid*, p. 156
3. Full details of all the writings of Ibn Taimiyah, many of which have been lost, are not available now. However, the total number of his works which include treatises, monographs and books, some of which cover only

[Continued on next page

independence of mind and indefatigable efforts, not only the course of religious thought of his time but also left such indelible imprints and influences which are still pregnant for the future. He can thus rightly be claimed as the harbinger of a new era of intellectual and religious thought in Islam.

Literary Achievements

There are some distinguishing characteristics of Ibn Taimiyah's writings which make them sigularly different from those of his contemporary scholars. They can still hold our interest and are, in fact, again exerting a formative influence on the more thoughtful sections of the Muslim society.

The first impression that a reader gathers from his writings is that the author has reached the core of religion. His discussions tend to centre round the fundamental bases of the subject matter while his forceful, lucid and exhaustive treatment of the subject captivates the heart and mind of the reader. Almost all his compositions, whether full-fledged treatises or small articles, especially those which deal with a credal, dialectical or juristic question, throw light on some inmost aspect or essence of the *Sharīʿah.*

Another feature of his writings is that they reflect the ideas, conditions and problems of his day. One can easily find out from his essays the moral and intellectual conditions, social problems and religious and cultural life of the society of his time. These descriptions also speak of the likes and dislikes, views and feelings of Ibn Taimiyah in regard to the prevailing conditions for he never wrote as an unconcerned and indifferent narrator of the events.[1]

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20 pages while others run into several volumes, is 621. Of these, the writings on exegesis number 102, on Traditions 41, Jurisprudence and discussion of juristic issues 166, dialectics and matters pertaining to creed 126, morals and mysticism 78, criticism of philosophy and logic 17, letters expounding theological issues 7 and on other miscellaneous subjects 84.

1. See, for instance, *Iqtidhāʾ Sirāt-ul-Mustaqīm Mukhālafata Ashāh ul-Jahīm*

His commentaries on the Quranic verses restate the abiding truths in terms of life and surrounding conditions, make a close study of the different sections of society, their manners and morals, customs and habits and point out the disfiguring innovations in form and thought resulting from the disregard of Divine guidance.[1] The intimate bearing of his writings on life of the then society has imparted them attraction and effectiveness which will hold attention of the people for all times to come.

Whatever subject Ibn Taimiyah takes up, he presents, in a few pages, all the connected material culling them from hundreds of volumes on different subjects. The comprehensive treatment of every issue on which he writes, whether pertaining to speculative sciences or creed and religion, is peculiar to Ibn Taimiyah. At times the matter collected by him in a single volume is so extensive that it takes a long and intensive study to assimilate it.[2] At the same time, however, the multitude of ideas and excess of details cloud the original theme and make it difficult for the reader to follow his thoughts. But this does not, in any way, decrease the usefulness of his works, each one of which is a compendium of all the then available information on that particular subject. But for these encyclopaedic works of Ibn Taimiyah a lot of precious thoughts, utterances and writings of the old would have been lost for ever.

Nevertheless, Ibn Taimiyah's writings lack concentration of treatment as he very often switches over to a related subject which unnecessarily prolongs the discussion. Anybody not acquainted with his writings, thus, finds it extremely difficult to assimilate his ideas as well as keep his eyes on the central theme of the essay. This is, undoubtedly, a natural defect found in the writings of those endowed with the breadth of interests and nimbleness along with impassioned eloquence, as was the case with Ibn Taimiyah. It seems that he was unable to keep him-

1. See the commentaries on *Sūrat-un-Nūr* and *Sūrat-ul-Ikhlās*.
2. For instance, see *Minhāj us-Sunnah* and *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahīh li-man Baddala Dīn al-Masīh*.

self strictly confined to the narrow limits of any subject and the restless wanderings of his mind continued to recall everything connected with the matter in hand in quick succession. This also holds true of his lectures as one of his disciples, Hafiz Abū Hafs al-Bazzār, succinctly described in these words, "Whenever he started lecturing on any subject the Providence unveiled before his eyes the treasurehouse of knowledge, recondite truths and hidden meanings, precepts and principles enunciated by the masters of yore and all the similitudes and illustrations of the subject found in Arabic poetics, and it seemed that a headstream of knowledge was surging forth like a swift torrent."[1] The same was the case during debates wherein he usually raised too many issues which confounded his contenders, who found it difficult to answer them adequately. This was the reason why the scholars of Syria and Egypt more often fought shy of challenging him during academic discussions or polemical disputations. One of his contemporary scholars and a noted debater, Sheikh Safī ud-dīn al-Hindī, once remarked, "Ibn Taimiyah, you are like a breezy bird; whenever I try to catch hold of you at one point you swiftly move on to another."[2]

The writings of Ibn Taimiyah, like his speeches, are burdened with excessive details and digressions from the main topic but even these, being informative and brilliantly couched, are rewarding for painstaking students.

Lastly, Ibn Taimiyah's works also differ from other writings of his time on dialectical and juristic subjects. Deviating from the beaten tack of a graceless and severe style and legal wordage of writings on these subjects, Ibn Taimiyah's dress of thought is graced by literary allusions and quick wit, ease and lucidity of style and vigour and eloquence which possess an immediate appeal to the readers. When he writes of the precepts of the old masters and the seemliness of the course followed by them his vigour of thought imparts a life, a spirit

1. *Al-Kawākib ud-Durriyah*, p. 155
2. *Nuzhatul Khawātir*, Vol. II, p. 14

to his writings that vies with the liveliness and grace of a forceful oration. Ibn Taimiyah's biographers and contemporary writers have also made a mention of his silvery tongue which was matched by his literary flourish. Speaking of the force and flow of Ibn Taimiyah's elocution, Hāfiz Abū Hafs al-Bazzār says: "His oration had the force of the flood, the rising tide of the sea. When he spoke, it appeared that he was not here but somewhere else: his eyes half closed and the face radiant with a heavenly grace, his haranguing overawed his audience."[1]

Ibn Taimiyah's efforts to revive the true faith cover a vast field which can broadly be categorised into revival of faith in the Unity of God, eradication of pantheistic ideas, criticism of philosophy, syllogistic logic and dialectics to assert the superiority of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, extirpation of un-Islamic beliefs through refutation of Christianity and Shi'āism and, lastly, rejuvenation of Islamic thought and its related sciences.

1. *Al-Kawākib ud-Durriyah*, p. 155

V

Reformative Endeavours

Thoughts borrowed from un-Islamic sources, irreligious precepts and dogmas fostered by the Isma'ilite Caliphate of Egypt and the pantheistic doctrines diffused by the illiterate and misguided *ṣūfī* mystics had given birth to numerous heretical beliefs and customs in those days. The Muslim masses had begun to look up to their religious teachers of yore, saints and martyrs as intercessors with God in almost the same way as Ezra and Jesus Christ had been elevated to the pedestal of Divinity by the Jews and the Christians. The tombs of Muslim saints presented the same spectacle—the same rituals, devotional services and oblations—as were commonly performed in martyries and sanctorums of the other faiths. Muslims too invoked the aid of their saints rather than of God: repaired to their graves in large numbers to celebrate the anniversaries of their death, constructed palatial buildings on their tombs, performed ceremonies implying reliance on them and perambulated around their shrines like the House of God. Graphic descriptions of the perverted beliefs and practices popular in those days have been left by Ibn Taimiyah. Some of these are reproduced here to give an idea of the popularity and strength of conviction gained by the perversion of saint-worship.

Divinity of Saints

"Most of the people hold the saints in reverence no less

than God and follow the commands of the attendants at their tombs, as if they were the saints' apostles. Supplications are offered to the departed saints to get their difficulties solved while the attendants are presumed to have the authority of declaring what is lawful or not under the *Sharīʿah*. These people have, in fact, dismissed God from Divinty and Muhammad from prophethood. Not unoften people come to seek redress against the wrongs done to them by the kings or to have some of their private affairs set right by a saint. The attendant then goes inside the shrine and promptly returns to report that the petitioner's request has been transmitted to God through the saint, and the prophet as well as God have accordingly sent word to the king in his affair. Is this not idolatry and ascribing partners to God? Surely it is blasphemy or rather naked idolatry which would not be tolerated even by the Christians and polytheists, nor would they be duped by such tricks. The way these attendants avail themselves of the offerings and presents brought to the shrines answers the description thus given in the Qur'ān :

> "O ye who believe! Lo! many of the (Jewish) rabbis and the (Christian) monks devour the wealth of mankind wantonly and debar (men) from the way of Allah."[1]

Tomb-Worship

"Many of these ignoramuses could be seen offering prayers facing the tombs or beseeching the saints to take pity on them and pardon their sins. Some have even their backs towards the Kaʿaba while offering prayers facing these graves; and when they are asked to desist from it they declare that the Kaʿāba is meant to serve as a *qibla* for the laity while the elect and pure in heart need pay divine honours to the saint alone. Of these persons, some are even known for their piety and devotion to prayer and have thousands of disciples. There are others too

1. *Ar-Raddo ʿala-al-Bakrī*, p. 298 (Q. : ix : 34)

who take to a life of exacting self-mortification and direct their disciples desiring penitence to complete a probation of forty days' prayer and penance at the tomb of their spiritual mentors. They sit meditating over the graves like idolaters contemplating upon their deities. These persons claim to have an exalted state of feeling, inspiration and rapturous joy in these shrines which they never attain in the mosques although—

> "This lamp is found in the house which Allah hath allowed to be exalted and (where) His name shall be remembered."[1]

Irreverence to God

"The saint-worshippers do not feel any hesitation in committing grievous sins but they tremble with fear if they happen to see the dome of their saint's shrine while deviating from the path of virtue. There they bid each other to be careful of the departed soul resting in the mausoleum. The saint they fear, but not God who has created the heaven and the earth and causes the moon to expand and decrease. If someone points out the blasphemy of their beliefs they try to intimidate him with the wrath of their saint in the same way as Ibrāhīm was threatened by the idolaters.[2]

> "His people argued with him. He said: Dispute ye with me concerning Allah when He hath guided me? I fear not at all that which ye set up beside Him unless my Lord willeth aught. My Lord includeth all things in His knowledge. Will ye not then remember?
>
> "How should I fear that which ye set up beside Him, when ye fear not to set up beside Allah that for which He hath revealed unto you no warrant? Which of the two factions hath more right to safety? (Answer me that) if ye have knowledge.
>
> "Those who believe and obscure not their belief by

1. *Ar-Raddc'alal-Bakri*, p. 295 (Q. xxiv : 36)
2. *Ibid.*, p. 298

wrong-doing, theirs is safety; and they are rightly guided."[1]

Derision of God

The description of saint-worshippers' sacrilegious behaviour given by Ibn Taimiyah goes on to say that "they poke fun at the Unity of God and sneer at the prayers offered to Him. They look with scorn upon *Haj* and the *Hajees* and believe that the visit to the shrines of the saints is more estimable than the performance of *Haj*. This is what the Shiʿāhs believe and many amongst the Sunnīs also. Some are even insolent enough to trifle with the mosques and the prayers offered therein, for they believe that the invocation of blessings by their *sheikhs* carries greater merit than the prayer offered to God. A sect amongst the Shiʿāhs claiming to be the follower of Yūnus Qaisī not only has faith in such blasphemous doctrines but even expresses it thus in the verses quoted here

"Hark, and let us lay in ruins:
The mosque to open a wine shop;
The pulpit, we must dismantle,
To fashion it into a lute and fiddle;
From the leaves of Qur'ān, we make a flute,
And of the Qāzī's beard, the guitar's string."[2]

Shameful Impudence

"They are so brazenly shameless that they assert on oath what they know to be manifestly untrue but would dare not to swear by their saints what they know to be correct. Their dictum runs, 'We need no sustenance which is not from our *sheikh*'; when they slay a goat they say, 'In the name of my Lord and Master'; some of them claim that their *sheikh* is superior to prophets of God; while others hold their spiritual mentors to be partakers of Divinity as the Christians think of Jesus Christ. There are still others who utter the name of their saints with the highest marks of respect; claim that their *sheikhs* have

1. Q. VI: 80-82
2. *Ar-Raddoʿalal Bakri*, p. 251

attained union with God; compose verses attributing Divine powers to them; while these *sheikhs* pretend that Moses had conversed with them when he fell in swoon or that their call makes the heavens move; and it is their fright which makes the worlds tremble and oceans restless."[1]

Divinity of the Saints and Prophets

"There are also those poor, misguided and unlettered folk who believe that the prophets are the creators and restorers of all things, the operators of the heavens and earth and it is they who solve all the difficulties of a man. This is obviously not the faith of Muslims but what Christians believe about Jesus Christ. But even the Christians regard only Christ to be the Divine word breathed from all eternity, for they do not hold such beliefs about other prophets like Ibrāhīm and Moses although they grope in blind and naked ignorance."[2]

"Some others rest in confidence that the inhabitants of every city or town get sustenance on account of their local saint who protects them from all the evils and enemies. The saint enjoying their trust is called the guardian spirit of the town as, for instance, Saiyida Nafīsah[3] is known as the guardian spirit o. Cairo and Egypt. Similarly there are other tutelary spirits of different cities who are supposed to ward off evil from them."[4]

"So credulous and superstitious they are", says Ibn Taimiyah, "that when the enemy advanced against Damascus, they gathered round the tombs of their saints whom they expected to beat off the danger. One of their poets says:

O who fear the Mongol rancor,
Come and be safe under Abū ʿAmar.

1. *Ar-Raddoʿalal-Bakrī*, p. 251
2. *Ibid.*, p. 328
3. Saiyida Nafisah (d. 208 A. H.) was the great granddaughter of Hasan, son of ʿAli, the fourth Caliph. Known for her piety and learning, her disciples included such luminaries as Imām Muhammad ibn Idris ash-Shafeʿī. Her grave is reported to be in Cairo.
4. *Ar-Raddoʿalal Akhnāī*, pp. 82-83

"Another poet calls out:

Abū ʿAmar's tomb is the fender
you need,
That can keep off every trouble,
indeed."[1]

Shrines and Martyries

The natural outcome of the growing popularity of saint-worship was that every shrine or tomb of a person reckoned to have died in the halo of sanctity became an object of general admiration and reverence; decreasing, as if in a balance, the importance of the mosques. Shrines of saints, quite a number of which were fake, sprang up in every part of the Muslim world which were lavishly provided with rich endowments by the rulers of the lands for their maintenance. Palatial mausoleums with gold plated domes were constructed and a whole army of attendants, ushers and menials soon gathered round them. Fairs and festivals came to be organised at regular intervals which were attended by pilgrims from far off places. At times these pilgrimages to the shrine of saints were taken more seriously than even the *Haj* pilgrimage. These shrines had thus become the objects of devout reverence and centres of religious observances during the seventh and eighth centuries after Hijrah, far exceeding in importance than the mosques and threatening to replace even the House of God. The descriptions of this outrageous multitheistic cult in Islam left by Ibn Taimiyah clearly show how deep-rooted and wide-spread the abuse had become in his days. One of the reasons for its gaining wide popularity amongst the illiterate masses was the encouragement it received from the Fatimide, or, more appropriately the Bātinite empire of Egypt which held an undisputed sway over the lands extending from the far west to Egypt and Syria for 266 years.[2] The Shiʿahs have always had a higher

1. *Ar-Raddoʿalal Bakrī*, pp. 377-78
2. For details see *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, Vol. I, pp. 256-61

regard for the tombs of their *Imāms* in comparison to the mosques, and for the shrines in Najaf, Karbala and Meshhad a greater respect than even the two Houses of God in Mecca and Madina. Although the Isma^cilite Caliphate had completed its days before Ibn Taimiyah was born, but its intellectual and cultural influences still lingered on as did large habitations of Shi^cahs and Isma^cilites in Egypt and Syria. Their corrupting influences had combined with the preverted teachings of the misguided *sūfi* mystics to raise the shrines of the saints in popular esteem and turn them into centres of blasphemous practices. A few more passages by Ibn Taimiyah describing the then prevalent devotional observances at the tombs of the saints would bear repetition here.

Pilgrimage to the Tombs

"There are some persons who perform pilgrimage to these tombs. A few of them have even written treatises expounding the *rituals to* be performed by the pilgrims. A Shi^cah doctor, Abū ^cAbdullāh Muhammad ibn Noamān known by the name of Bil-Mufīd, has written a book entitled *Manāsik Hajj-ul-Mashāhid* in which he attributes certain sayings to the members of the prophet's household upholding saint-worship, although the spurious quotations given by him are manifestly absurd and meaningless."[1]

"The pilgrimages to the shrines are often given preference while there are people who labour under the misconception that two or three pilgrimages to the shrines of certain venerable saints are equal in merit to *Haj* pilgrimage. There are others who hold the tomb of their *sheikhs* to be another plain of Arafāt; they pay a visit to them during the days of *Haj* and remain there exactly for the same period as one is required to camp in Arafāt during the *Haj*. This practice is prevalent in the East as well as in the West. Some of these misguided persons hold the pilgrimage to their saints' shrines higher in estimation than

1. *Ar-Raddo^calal-Bakrī*, p. 295

the *Haj* itself. Once the disciple of a saint offered to exchange the seven *Hajs* performed by him for a single visit to his saint's shrine paid by another man. The latter enquired about it from his *Sheikh* who told him that if he had agreed to the transaction he would have suffered a great loss. One can often hear these people making the assertion that perambulations seven times round the grave of a saint are equal in merit to one *Haj*."[1]

Scant Regard paid to the Mosques

"Without bestowing any care on the mosques which give a dull and deserted look, shrines are adorned with beautiful carvings and decorated by splash of colour and artistic designs. The mosques meant for offering obligatory prayers five times a day are left to the mercy of the poor who are often unable to provide even a carpet and a lamp for them. But, compared to these mosques, looking like neglected inns, the shrines are deco rated with beautiful curtains, adorned with gold and silver ornamentations and provided with marble floors. Gifts and oblations continue to be offered at these shrines all round the year. Does all this not mean an open disrespect of God, His signs and His Apostle, and associating partners to Him? But why does this happen? This demonstrates the common faith of these people that the supplications made in a shrine or calling out one's needs in the name of the saints are more efficacious than the prayers offered to God in the mosques. The natural outcome of such a belief is that the shrines are given preference over thc mosques which were to be the houses meant for sending up all supplications and invocations and entreaties and beseechments. If there are endowments for the upkeep of both a mosque and a shrine, the trust for the latter would invariably be lavishly provided with funds in comparison to that of the mosque. They follow in the footsteps of the pagans of Arabia

1. *Ar-Raddoᶜalal-Bakrī*, p. 296

who have been described thus by the Qur'ān:

"They assign unto Allah, of the crops and cattle which He created, a portion, and they say: 'This is Allah's,—in their make-believe—'and this is for (His) partners in regard to us.' Thus that which (they assign) unto His partners in them reacheth not Allah and that which (they assign) unto Allah goeth to their (so called) partners. Evil is their ordinance."[1]

Despite the existence of powerful Muslim kingdoms and celebrated centres of Islamic learning and the presence of a large number of theologians, legists and other doctors of religion, the Muslim world had yielded, during the seventh and eighth centuries of the Islamic era, to a blind allegiance to the saints and *walīs*, omens and auguries, sacred shrines and richly ornamented tombs. Not to speak of the populace, even the learned and the erudite scholars seem to have been unresolved about the common beliefs and practices. The writings of Ibn Taimiyah's contemporaries show that they had failed to distinguish clearly the essential elements of Islam—the unity of God and the "pure faith" as laid down by the Qur'ān and the precepts and practices of the Prophet, from the current accretions and contaminations. Some of his contemporary doctors of religion had even joined their faith to these popular but lamentable departures from the first principles of Islam. This is amply borne out by two copious volumes written by Ibn Taimiyah to confute Sheikh ʿAlī Ibn Yʿaqūb al-Bakrī and Qazi Taqīud-dīn al-Akhnāī'.

Reformative Endeavours

The banner of reform raised by Ibn Taimiyah, undeterred by the bitter opposition of the misguided masses, posed a threat to the very foundations of unwarranted luxury, idolatry and superstitions of the age. The masses repaired to the tombs of

1. *Ar-Raddoʿalal-Bakrī*, p. 250 (Q vi: 136)

the saints, offered presents and oblations and indulged in practices contrary to the worship of the one and only God. They believed that their prayers would be really answered if made in the name of a saint. Ibn Taimiyah demonstrated by his writings that no prayer or invocation to anyone besides God was allowed by Islam; for, that amounts to ascribing partners to God, and was an un-Islamic practice borrowed by the illiterate laity from their non-Muslim neighbours. "The teachings of the Prophet of Islam leave no doubt," wrote Ibn Taimiyah in *ar-Raddoʿalal Bakrī*, "that he never permitted his followers to supplicate to any departed soul, whether a prophet or a saint either by way of appeal or intercession. Similarly it is not lawful to prostrate before any being, living or dead, or to pay homage to anybody in a way prescribed for divine service. We all know that the Prophet has prohibited all these acts which are, in fact, different forms of *shirk* or ascribing plurality to God, and hence strictly prohibited by God and His Apostle. If the theologians of bygone days did not declare such ignoramuses as outright apostates it was because people were unlettered and ignorant of the teachings of the Prophet. They considered it prudent to wait till the precepts of the Prophet and ordinances of the true faith were made known to all."[1]

At another place in the same book he writes that "imploring the dead, whether to prefer a petition or to make an appeal for redress is something foreign to the *Sharīʿah* of Islam. This is also a kind of idolatry. Sometimes the devil appears before the supplicant in the guise of a saint or in some other form as it sometimes happens with the idolaters. Ibn ʿAbbās has truly said that the idolatry began with the worship of tombs."[2]

"All the earlier precursors of Islam are agreed," says Ibn Taimiyah, "that making a request to some one dead or absent, whether a prophet or not is prohibited. God and His apostle have not allowed such invocations; neither the companions and

1. *Ar-Raddoʿalal Bakri,* p. 377
2. *Ibid.*, p. 56

their successors nor the earlier jurists have approved of them. The religious canon which has been preserved in its prestine purity and handed down to us intact bears a testimony to the fact that no matter how distressing or how unfavourable the circumstances were during the initial period of Islam, nobody ever appealed to any prophet or saint for help nor sought their protection as the misguided people are prone to do now-a-days. There is not a single instance of any companion calling out the Prophet after his demise or any other apostle of God or visiting his tomb for seeking his help. The companions of the Prophet were often engaged by the enemy in bloody conflicts, sometimes they were dispersed and dismayed by the furious onslaught of the invading foe or were plunged in difficulties but none of them ever called out to a prophet or saint or any other created being nor one of them ever went to the Prophet's tomb to offer prayers. Imām Mālik and certain other doctors of faith even abhor praying for oneself near the tomb of the Prophet. They have clearly stated that this is an innovation of later ages without any precedent of the Prophet's companions."[1]

In *at-Tawassul wal-wasīlah*, the renowned monograph on the subject of intercession, Ibn Taimiyah says, "Beseeching the angels for help or calling upon a prophet in his absence or after his death or asking their statues or idols to intercede on one's behalf is a newly grown cult which God neither authorised nor commended to a prophet nor yet sent a scripture to uphold it."[2]

Prayer for God Alone

Expounding the reason for prohibition of prayers and supplications addressed to a being other than God, he says: "Although God has told us that the angels seek forgiveness for the dwellers on earth, He has forbidden us to pray unto them. Similarly, the prophets and saints remain alive in their graves

1. *Ar-Raddo'alal-Bakri*, p. 232
2. *Qai'dah*, p. 15

and, as certain other Traditions tell us, they invoke Divine blessings upon us, but it is not lawful for us to supplicate to them. For it points the way to associating partners with God, the past generations reputed for true faith and piety never prayed to anyone besides God. On the contrary, asking anything from a living being does not smack of *shirk*. The supplication made by an angel, prophet or saint for the living beings is an act imprinted upon his soul and does not stand in the need of our requesting him to do so. There is no harm in requesting a living soul for something but after his death it is simply not capable of acceding to any request."[1]

Kinds of Saint-worship

At another place Ibn Taimiyah defines the kinds of *shirk* involved in imploring the departed prophets and saints. He says: "One of its forms is that some one makes a request to the dead soul to fulfil his needs or bestow health on himself, his household members or his cattle or desires vengeance for his foe, or else asks for something which cannot be granted by anyone except God. All these amount to ascribing partners to God and the person imploring the dead in this manner should be required to express penitence and if he fails to do so, he should be slain."

"Now, if this man takes the plea," continues Ibn Taimiyah, "that he calls for the help of the saint or prophet because they are nearer to God and that they can intercede for him with God as the elite and grandees do with the kings, then his action resembles that of polytheists and Christians. They also look up to their priests and clergymen merely as intercessors with God. But God has already informed us of the plea taken by the polytheists who say, "We only serve them that they may bring us near God."

"And this is what God says about them :—

'Or chose they intercessors other than Allah? Say: What! Even though they have power over nothing and have

1. *Qai'dah*, p. 132

no intelligence?

'Say: Unto Allah belongeth all intercession. His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. And afterward unto Him ye will be brought back.[1]

'Ye have not, beside Him, a protecting friend or mediator, will ye not then remember?[2]

'Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave?[3]

"Sometimes the deceased saint is not asked to grant any favour but he is requested to pray on one's behalf as people sometimes do for others, or, as the Prophet of Islam invoked Divine blessings for his companions during his life-time. But one ought to know that the *Sharīʿah* allows only those who are alive to be requested for pronouncing benediction on their fellow beings. Thus, asking those who are no more alive to pray for us would be exceeding the limit set by the religion. No companion of the Prophet nor his successor ever did so, nor has any *Imām* allowed it. There is also no Tradition to support it. On the contrary, we find that when a severe famine raged during Caliph ʿUmar's rule, he requested ʿAbbās to pray for them and himself prayed thus: O' God, whenever there was a famine earlier, we requested Thy Apostle to intercede for us and Thou wast pleased to send down rain on us. Now we seek Thy favour through the uncle of the Prophet and request Thee for a downpour.' Caliph ʿUmar did not go to the Prophet's tomb at this hour of distress, nor any other companion did so on a similar occasion. Requesting the dead to pray is an innovation which is not supported by the Qurʾān or by the *Sunnah*.

"Thirdly, one may beseech God in this manner: 'I request Thee, O our Lord, in the name of such and such prophet or saint, whom Thou lovest to extend me a helping hand.' Invocations made in this wise are common these days but no

1. Q. XXXIX: 43-44
2. Q. XXXII: 4
3. Q. II: 255

companion of the Prophet or his successor is reported to have addressed his prayers even in this manner. Some doctors of faith permit imploring God in this way only with the name of the Prophet while there are others who hold that such petitions could be so preferred only in the life-time of the Prophet but not after his death."[1]

Solicitations from the Living

Ibn Taimiyah interdicted not only the practice of supplicating to the departed prophets, saints or other pious souls but also objected to the requests made to a man for something beyond his powers or pertaining to the matters falling within the province of Divinity. Elucidating his view-point in *Ziārat-ul-Quboor*, he says: "To implore a saint, a prophet or a king whether dead or alive, is unlawful if the object desired is such as the health of cattles, deliverance from debt without any effort to repay it, peace and happiness for one's family members, attainment of Heaven, rescue from Hell, acquisition of knowledge, learning of the Qur'ān, and the like; for, these can be granted by God alone. If anybody entreats a created being in these matters, he would be deemed to be a polytheist like pagans who worshipped the angels and the prophets and the idols or like the Christians who asked for divine grace from Jesus and Mary."[2]

Intercession

It is often contended that opposition to the invocation or calling up of the help of a prophet, saint or *wali* amounts to the denial of mediation of the prophets between man and God although they were an essential link between the Creator and the human beings. Ibn Taimiyah explained that mediation is spoken of in two distinct senses, one of which constitutes the fundamental principle of religion while the other is heretical

1. *Ziāratul Quboor, Majmu'a Rasā'il*, pp. 106-112
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5

innovation undermining the bases of faith. Ibn Taimiyah wrote *al-Wāstah Bain ul-Khalq wal-Haq* for a fulller exposition of the point. In it he says that "if mediation of an apostle of God means that he is an essential link between man and God to explain the guidance vouchasafed to him by the Lord to his fellow beings, then it is entirely correct as there is no other way of knowing the ordinances and injunctions of God Almighty. We have no other means to know of the treasures of everlasting joy promised to the pious and righteous and of the Hell fire kept ready for the infidel and the agnostic. The knowledge about the nature and attributes of God is verily beyond the reach of human intellect and, therefore, it can be gained only through the prophets sent by God. This is a fundamental truth accepted by all : the Muslims, the Jews and the Christians ; the followers of all the revealed religions are agreed on the need of a link between man and the Lord, a God moved soul entrusted with the delivery of God's own message to His creation. The Divine writ proclaims in no uncertain words :

> "Allah chooseth from the angels messengers and (also) from mankind."[1]

"Any body who denies the mission of these chosen apostles of God is an unbeliever in the eyes of every revealed religion."[2]

"But, if mediation means that an intercessor is needed for the grant of sustenance and livelihod, patronage and the distribution of Divine bounty whom every one has to implore for obtaining these, then it amounts to associating partners to God. In fact God has condemned polytheists simply because they hoped to obtain some benefit or avoid a punishment through their saints and holy personages."[3]

However, the masses and even some of the persons belonging to the ranks of the *ʿulamā* had raised not only the Prophet of Islam but the saints and *walīs* as well to the level of living

1. Q. XXII : 75
2. *Al-Wāstah*, pp. 45-46
3. *Ibid.*, p. 46

intercessors for them at the throne of God, to whom they addressed their supplications for blessings and patronage. In regard to these misguided folk, Ibn Taimiyah says : "The *Imāms* and the doctors of faith are also connecting links like apostles, but between the Prophet of Islam and his followers : they are preachers and path-finders of religion worthy to be emulated by the believers ; their concordant opinions should be accepted by all, for they can never agree on what is misleading. If they disagree on any issue, one shall have to turn back to God and the Prophet as none of these doctors can be considered impeccable in his own right like the Prophet of Islam."

"But, undoubtedly, one is an apostate and unbeliever, if one regards the saints and the divines, the *walīs* and the men of religion as divine functionaries or mediators between man and God like the stewards and attendants of a King, whom one has to approach to get into the good grace of a sovereign. Such a man should be asked to repent and if he refuses, he should be put to the sword, for, a polytheist is he who ascribes partners unto God."[1]

Origin of Saint Worship

Ibn Taimiyah traced the origin of saint-cum-tomb-worship to show that it were the Bātanites and Rafizīs who started the practice and coined spurious Traditions favouring their interested views since they wanted to awaken popular enthusiasm in their own *Imāms* and their shrines. "First of all," says Ibn Taimiyah, "they forged Traditions, which affirm the advantages and benefits of undertaking pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints. Rafizīs and other heretical sects wanted to see the mosques forsaken in order to raise these shrines in popular esteem where a new religion could be fabricated. In the Book of God and the Tradition of the Prophets one finds mention of mosques only and not of the shrines of holy men. This is what God ordains :

"Say My Lord enjoineth justice. And set your faces

1. *Al-Wāstah*, pp. 47-48

upright (toward Him) at every place of worship and call upon Him making religion pure for Him (only)."[1]

"And the places of worship are only for Allah, so pray not unto anyone along with Allah."[2]

"He only shall tend Allah's sanctuaries who believeth in Allah and the last day and observeth proper worship."[3]

'Be at your devotions in the mosques."[4]

"And who doth greater wrong than he who forbiddeth the approach to sanctuaries of Allah lest His name should be mentioned therein, and striveth for their ruin."[5]

"Likewise, an authentic Tradition of the Prophet goes on to say: 'There were people before you (the Jews and the Christians) who used to make churches and synagogues over the tombs. Be careful not to do the same. I forbid you to do so."[6]

He also maintained that "most of the shrines of saints are spurious tombs which were constructed by the impostors to deceive the people. Since very many people are duped by them, the shrines have not been assigned any place in the religion nor has God undertaken to safeguard them. Nor has He charged us with the responsibility of searching out the genuine tombs of the saints, for no religious observance is to be performed over them."[7]

1. Q. VII : 29
2. Q. LXXII : 18
3. Q. IX : 18
4. II : 187
5. II : 114
6. *Ar-Raddo'alal Akhnā'i*, p. 48
7. *Ar-Raddo'ālal Bakrī*, p. 313 (What Ibn Taimiyah wrote about the then shrines is borne out by the fact that there is hardly any reliable evidence to show the genuineness of numerous other shrines as, for instance, the one in Cairo where the head of Imām Husain is supposed to have been buried, the tombs of Hazrat Zainab, or the grave of Caliph 'Alī in Najaf; certain tombs claimed to be the graves of the Prophet's wives or the shrine of Syed 'Alī Hajwairī, known as the tomb of Dātā Ganj Baksh, in Lahore, are also spurious.

Superstitious Beliefs

The cult of saint-worship had given rise to another abuse and this was the tendency to lean towards superstition and even idolatry. This misdirected reverence of the mysterious had reconciled the conscience of the believers to the so-called ability of saints to cure chronic diseases and to answer their prayers. False stories spread by the devotees of the saints asserting that their own needs had been fulfilled by their saints had fostered such a belief. But unfaltering faith and insight into the teachings of Islam guided Ibn Taimiyah to reject all such spurious claims. He could not give up the profound truth learnt from the Scripture and Traditions for the figments of saint-worshippers' imagination. He had no difficulty in reaching the conclusion that the popular belief in this regard was no more than the over-credulous and blind faith of the masses. There were certain shrines in Cairo where horses suffering from indigestion were supposed to be restored to health. Ibn Taimiyah proved that these so-called saints were really Obeᶜidite or Fatimite heretics. The punishment which these heretics received in their graves was, according to the Traditions, visible to all except men and jinn. These horses also saw this punishment which was so severe and gruesome that it frightened the poor beasts to excrete and this was taken by the simple-minded folk as a sign of their restoration of health.[1] The votaries of the saints often claimed that the souls of the holy personages on whom they called upon sometimes appeared in person before them. Ibn Taimiyah rejected these claims as impious beliefs for he maintained that similar claims were made by the worshippers of the idols and stars also. These, too, he held to be devils and evil spirits appearing to mislead the misguided and unbelieving people.[2] He showed by his irresistible reasoning that such experiences were common to the ignorant people subscribing to the heathen cults but no sooner did they embrace Islam, as, for example, the

1. *Ar-Raddoᶜalal Bakrī*, pp. 310-11
2. *Kitābbun-Nābuwāt*, p. 274

Tartars, than the light of reasoning dawned on them and they ceased to have these demoniacal experiences.[1]

Profound Impact of Ibn Taimiyah

There was no dearth of reputed *ʿulamā* and men of letters nor were the preachers and sermonisers shy of fighting un-Islamic ideas and vestiges of the pagan past during the seventh and eighth century after *Hijrah*. If the annalists have not left any record of their efforts to combat the innovations tending to deface the true faith in the Unity of God, it is because they all remained hugging their creed but a little bewildered about how to act in pursuance of that faith in a way more effective, more far-reaching. The widespread contamination of *shirk*, pantheistic ideas and creeds which had captured the heart of the populace required an erudite scholar who could clearly distinguish between the essential elements of Islam and its un-Islamic admixtures; one who was determined to propagate nothing but the 'pure faith' and was also courageous enough to stand for what he believed to be right, regardless of the suffering it might bring upon him. *Tawhīd* or the Unity of Godhead, by its very nature, does not admit of any compromise, any concession to the opposing views and interests, and that is the reason why the apostles of God had always to be sternly firm, inflexible and unyielding in their fight against the lewdness of godlessnes and infidelity. Ibn Taimiyah deputised the prophets in combating the superstitions of his age and the unwarranted concessions to the idolatry of his times; he subjected these doctrines to such a hostile criticism that it caused a flutter in the rank of dissenters and blasphemers. The fundamental basis of Islam—faith in the Unity of God, His Absolute Power, His essential attribute of Eternity, His Omniscence—the purpose for which revelations were vouchsafed to the prophets, was once again forcefully presented by him before the world. The achievement of Ibn Taimiyah in this field alone is quite sufficient to mark him as

1. *Tafsīr Sūrah Ikhlās*, p. 118

one of the most outstanding reformers and renovators of the faith. His writings on the subject so profoundly altered the course of religious thought in the later centuries that a number of reformers after him raised their voice to restore the true faith—faith in God alone—whenever the vestiges of paganism and ignorance threatened to contaminate the teachings of Islam.

VI

Criticism of Philosophy and Dialectics

The second achievement of Ibn Taimiyah, both of a reformative as well as literary character, was to demonstrate the superiority of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* and their method of reasoning over Philosophy and Dialectics as well as logical syllogism employed by the two. In order to make an assessment of Ibn Taimiyah's reformative endeavour in this field, it appears necessary to take a cursory glance of the development of philosophy in Islam.

The Historical Background

Translation of the Greek scientific and philosophical works into Arabic had begun to be made shortly after the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate, during the reign of Caliph Mansūr (136-158 A.H.). Numerous philosophical terms used by the Mutazilites of this period in their writings show that they were fully conversant with the works of Greek Philosophers. But the organised work of these translations began on a large scale under the royal patronage of Al-Māmūn (198-218 A.H.) who was himself an enthusiastic admirer of Greek Philosophy. Sāʿyid Andlūsī writes in *Tabqāt ul-Umam* that Al-Māmūn "called for the works of Greek philosophers from the kings of Greece who sent him the books written by Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen, Euclid, Ptolemy and others. Al-Māmūn got them translated into Arabic and encouraged scholars to study them. During his reign these works became quite popular which helped to produce many an ardent admirer of philosophy

among the young and intelligent scholars of his time. These scholars were also handsomely rewarded by the royal court which vied with the Senate of the Roman Emperors."[1]

The work of translations started by Al-Māmūn continued until, by the end of the fourth century, a greater part of the philosophical and scientific literature of the Greeks was made available in Arabic.[2]

The vast extent of translations into Arabic listed the titles of quite a large number of Greek authors but owing to a predilection of the translators who were mostly Nestorian, Yaqūbi Christians or Sabians of Harran, or because Aristotelianism had prevailed among the last philosophers of antiquity, the works of Aristotle were studied by the Arabs with a special zeal. The traditions of Greek philosophy among the Arabs thus came to be associated with Aristotle who became a mark and symbol of philosophy and was invested with an aura of infallibility. It was indeed a misfortune of the Islamic East that its choice fell for a philosopher who, of all the Greek masters, was an ardent supporter of the objective existence of the material world, its primacy and eternity, and who rejected the categories of thought recognising the element of spirit, religious eschatology and the will of God.

Disciples of Greek Philosophers

The Muslim students of philosophy did not, in the initial stages, blindly subscribe to the Aristotelian logic and philosophy nor did they spare it a searching scrutiny and criticism. A number of them wrote treatises severely criticising the weaker aspects of Aristotelian philosophy and metaphysics. Foremost among these, specially Nazzām and Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī, were Mutazilite scholars. Hasan ibn Mūsa Naubakhtī wrote *Kitāb ul-Arā' Wad-Dayyanāt* in the third century of the *Hijrah* to disprove certain premises of Aristotelian logic, while Abū Bakr Baqillānī

1. *Tabqāt-ul-Umam*, p. 47
2. *See Fihrist ibn Nadīm* and *Tabaqāt-ul-Atibba*

composed *Waqā'iq* in the fourth century to refute Aristotle and demonstrate the superiority of Arab philosophy over the Greek thought. In the fifth century ᶜAbdul Karīm Shahrshtānī[1] wrote a monograph to contradict Proclus and Aristotle in which he brought out the contradictory features of their philosophical thought in accordance with the rules of logic. Then, by the end of that century Al-Ghazālī rose to become the greatest adversary of the Greek philosophy. His *Tahāfut al-Falāsafah* caused such a severe damage to philosophy that it could not regain its lost vigour for a hundred years.[2] Abul Barakāt Baghdādī took up this tradition further ahead through his renowned work entitled *Al-Mūᶜtabar* in which he disproved a greater part of the Aristotelian thought. Imām Rāzī, too, in the same century, proved his worth as an indomitable advocate of the Ashᶜarites and dialecticians by holding up philosophy to a severe reprobation.

But the coterie of philosophers in Islam regarded as the representative and standard-bearer of the Greek school of thought had been so powerfully enamoured by Aristotle that it held him as a prince of philosophers and an infallible teacher beyond every reproach. It seems that the respect for Aristotle continued to rise higher in this circle with the passage of time, since, every philosopher deemed it his duty to pay homage to this Greek master dutifully and in a more reverential language than his predecessor. "Both these philosophers are the founders and perfectors of philosophy and its principles and premises," wrote Abū Nasr al-Farābī (d. 339 A.H.) about Aristotle and Plato, "for every *a priori* principle and hypothesis of philosophy can be traced to them."[3] Abū ᶜAlī Sīnā[4] (d. 428 A.H.) was a still more ardent admirer of Aristotle who wrote in *Mantiq us-Shifā'*: "No addition could be made to the researches of Aristotle in

1. Author of *Al-Milal wan-Namal*
2. For details see Saviours of Islamic Spirit, Vol. I, pp. 124-27
3. *Al-Majmᶜa Bain Rai-il-Hakīmain*
4. Commonly known to the west by the name of Avicenna

philosophy despite the passage of such a long time after him."[1]

Ibn Rushd[2] (d. 595 A.H.) was the greatest philosopher born in Islam after Abī Sīnā but he shows for Aristotle the most unconditional reverence, going in this respect much further than his predecessors. His adoration for Aristotle seems to have reached the stage—to use the language of mysticism—of a total absorption into his mentor. A modern biographer of Ibn Rushd writing about his veneration of Aristotle says : "His reverence for Aristotle knows no bounds : he considers him as the man whom God permitted to reach the highest summit of perfection in wisdom and intellect. He ascribes even the qualities and attributes of God to him. Of a fact, had he been a polytheist, he would have raised Aristotle to the position of the Lord of all lesser gods."[3]

Then, in the seventh century after *Hijrah* Nasīr ud-dīn Tūsī (d. 672 A.H.) made his debut as a torch-bearer of philosophy. He is known in the circle of philosophers as Muhaqiq Tūsī (the Researcher from Tūs). He was also a Counsellor and Minister of Halākū at a time when the barbaric inroads by the Tartar hordes into the lands of Islam and the sack of Baghdad had sapped all the intellectual energy of the Muslim world. Tūsī, along with his two disciples Qutb ud-dīn Shirāzī and Qutb-ud-dīn Rāzī, founded in Iran the school of thought which allocated central place to logic and philosophy in all the branches of secular and religious sciences. Tūsī and his followers regarded Aristotle as the Agent Intellect whose findings were the touchstone of reality. Their defence of Aristotle against the criticisms of Imām Rāzī served to give a new lease of life to the Aristotelian thought in the East.

Scientific Evaluation of Logic and Philosophy

Ibn Taimiyah was born ten years before Tūsī breathed his

1. *Al-Nadwa*, Vol. I (Quoted from *Mantiq us-Shifā'*.)
2. Known by the name of Averroes in the West
3. *Lutfī Jam'ah*, p. 155

last. When Ibn Taimiyah came of age, Aristotelianism dominated the intellectual and literary scene owing to the influence exerted by Tūsī and his followers. Thus, it was the time when a thorough grasp of Aristotelian logic and philosophy was deemed to be the summit of one's intellectual attainment, when nobody could dare to raise a dissenting voice against the teachings of the Greek master. The Traditionists and legists, without any *locus standi* in that field, could hardly do anything to stem the rising tide of philosophy. They could, at the most, pronounce the juristic opinion prohibiting the study of philosophy but that too would have been ineffective in an atmosphere surcharged with the highest regard for the philosophical concepts. Among the scholars predisposed to philosophy some had turned sceptic; others inclined to neo-Platonic concepts were preaching nihilism; while the rest suffered from an inferiority complex. How, in this atmosphere, Ibn Taimiyah was able to overcome this wave of Greek influence and how he argued powerfully against philosophy can best be seen from his own writings.

Physics and Mathematics

Of the writings attributed to Plato and Aristotle, Ibn Taimiyah too made a distinction, like Al-Ghazālī, between the investigations falling in the sphere of physics and mathematics, on the one hand, and those containing metaphysical views, on the other. He acknowledged the intellectual brilliance of the Greek philosophers and accepted the correctness of a portion of their findings pertaining to the former category. "A greater part of the discussions of these philosophers", wrote Ibn Taimiyah, "relating to physics is quite clear, detailed and convincing. They possessed intellect and aptitude to understand these subjects and, instead of being predisposed to any particular view, they seem to be searching for what is right and correct."[1] Expressing similar views about the Greek mathematics he wrote in

1. *Ar-Raddo'alal Bakrī*, p. 143

*Ar-Raddo*ᶜ*alal Mantaqiyīn* : "The mathematical formulas dealing with numerals are quite convincing and are unanimously accepted by all scholars. Every man has to have some knowledge of these for one needs them for conducting his daily business as also for further studies. Who can dispute that one is not half of two? Of a fact, their equations are acceptable, for they have no *inexactness to which any objection could be raised*."[1]

Metaphysics

It was, however, the metaphysics of Greek philosophy which was opposed by Ibn Taimiyah. Drawing attention towards various unreasonable and even stupid surmises of the Greek metaphysical concepts, which were branded by him as blind and naked ignorance, he observed that the Greek philosophers could have set forth their speculative thought without blundering into its metaphysical domain of absurdity and saved themselves from becoming a laughing stock. "The philosophers bringing their mind to bear upon physics", wrote Ibn Taimiyah, "show their mettle, but in metaphysics they appear to be unenlightened folk without any knowledge of what constitutes the truth. Very little of metaphysics has been handed down from Aristotle, but even *that* contains numerous faulty concepts."[2] In another article on the subject he says of the philosophers: "So far as the knowledge of God is concerned, these unlucky people appear to be deprived of the truth. They have no knowledge of the angels, divine scriptures, and prophets of God, for they had heard nothing about these either in favour or against them. Only some of the later philosophers acquainted with the revealed religions have spoken about these matters."[3]

Ibn Taimiyah argued that since the Greek philosophers have themselves acknowledged their inability to attain certitude of knowledge in matters falling in the domain of metaphysics,

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1. *Ar-Rāddo*ᶜ*alal Mantaqīyin*, p. 134
2. *Ma*ᶜ*arij ul-Wasūl*, p. 186
3. *Tafsīr Sūrah Ikhlās*, p. 57

their theories in regard to it can only be mere suppositions and surmises. He says: "Some of the greatest philosophers have clearly stated that there is no way known to them to reach the certitude of knowledge in matters pertaining to metaphysics. The utmost claim that they make is that whatever they say is nearer to reason. This, obviously, means that the philosophers have nothing but conjectures and presumptions to solve the metaphysical riddles; but, as the Qur'ān declares, specious reasoning can never take the place of divine revelation."[1]

Prophetic Teachings and Greek Metaphysics

Ibn Taimiyah was surprised or rather pained to see certain philosophers equating the prophetic teachings with the metaphysical speculation of the Greek philosophers. "When an educated person makes a close study of the Aristotelian metaphysics", writes Ibn Taimiyah, "he reaches the conclusion that there was none more ignorant of the gnosis of God than these philosophers." But he is even more amazed to see certain persons trying to compare the Greek metaphysics with the teachings and the knowledge obtained through the prophets of God. "Such comparisons were", according to Ibn Taimiyah, "no better than an effort to establish analogy between a blacksmith and an angel or between a petty landlord and an Emperor. In fact there can be some resemblance between petty landlords and Emperors for the former too administer a small estate but the philosophers are completely unfamiliar with the message of the prophets. Even the pagans and the Jews and Christians know more about God, His nature and attributes than these philosophers do. I do not mean to charge these philosophers of being ignorant of the knowledge revealed to the apostles of God, for that is vouchsafed to the prophets alone. They are even ignorant of the knowledge diffused by the prophets in regard to the nature and attributes of God, prophethood and Hereafter which can, to an extent, be comprehended through

1. *Naqdh-ul-Mantiq*, p. 178

reason. Even these are a sealed book for the philosophers, much less the things which are unseen and beyond the ken of human perception and are known to the prophets through revelation. There can in fact be no comparison between the philosophical metaphysics and the teachings of the prophets of God."[1]

Ignorance of Philosophers

Explaining the reason why the philosophers plead ignorance of the facts of mute reality, Ibn Taimiyah writes: "The philosophers are absolutely unfamiliar with the unseen realities taught by the prophets as also with those comprehensive natural laws which envelop all beings and creations and whose knowledge could have helped them to correctly categorise all the existing things. Only he can be capable of attempting it who can encompass the whole varied existence but the philosophers have but little knowledge of mathematics and the laws related to it. This in fact shows their comprehension of just a small part of the general causes and principles of natural phenomena. But the existence of beings and causes not known to man far exceed that of which he has any knowledge. Thus all those persons whose knowledge is limited like that of the philosophers, are taken by surprise when they are told that numerous other objects such as prophets, angels, empyrean, heaven and hell also exist. They are surprised because they believe that nothing exists beyond what they know. This is also the reason why they try to interpret the facts of unseen realities told by the prophets in the light of limited knowledge of things they possess. Their arguments are really baseless for they have no positive evidence of the non-existence of thing's not known by them. Of a fact, to lack the knowledge of a thing's existence is quite different from the non-existence of anything. It is not necessary that whatever we do not know does not have any existence. Their denial of the unseen realities is like the denial of the jinn by a physician

1 *Ar-Raddo ʿalal Mantaqiyin*, p. 395

on the ground that the medical science does not afford any evidence of their existence, although medical science does not prove their non-existence too. Similar is the case with others possessing knowledge in a particular branch of science. Whatever they find out outside the compass of their own knowledge, they deny simply out of their ignorance of it. The fact is that man has not been as much misled in owning and accepting the things as in denying that of which he has no knowledge. This is a common weakness and natural propensity of human beings which has thus been spoken of by God :

> "Nay, but they denied that, the knowledge whereof they could not compass, and whereof the interpretation (in events) hath not yet come unto them."[1]

Heritage of the Pagan Greece

Ancient Greece bequeathed to the world the valuable treasures of physics and mathematical sciences, and had illuminated the world with its intellectual brilliance for thousands of years but it was also a land of idol and star worshippers given to numerous superstitious and irrational religious beliefs. Modern researches into the historical past of the Greeks have shown that innumerable temples with a myriad of gods and goddesses littered the land. The Greek philosophy which was transmitted to the Islamic world through its Arabic translations, and thence to Europe, was permeated with its mythology and idolatrous beliefs. Transformed into philosophical terminology, the Greek mythology had been presented by its philosophers through a skilful use of syllogistic logic and a chain of reasoning, and was accepted by the Arab philosophers without any reservation as the patrimony of Greek speculative thought. Most of these philosophers had been led astray because of the inadequate knowledge of Greek history and religious beliefs. But the penetrating intellect Ibn Taimiyah possessed discerned the idolatrous bases of Greek philosophy hundreds of years before it

1. Q. X : 39

was brought to light by modern researches. He writes: "The ancient Greeks were a heathen people keenly interested in sorcery. They worshipped idols along with the stars and that is why they turned to astronomy. It was because of their belief in the occult influence of the stars upon human beings that they had built numerous temples for star worship."[1] At another place he says: "Many of their ancient and later priests promoted idolatrous practices. They called the stars as lesser gods and prescribed different religious rites for their worship. Those among the Muslims who have taken to their ways neither forbid polytheistic practices nor consider Unity of Godhead an essential part of one's faith."[2]

Distinction Drawn Between Ancient and Later Philosophers

Ibn Taimiyah made a distinction between the philosophical concepts of antiquity and those of the later philosophers, which, again, affords a proof of the agility of his mind and the deep knowledge of Greek thought. He pointed out that it was Aristotle and the later philosophers after him wedded to the view of rationality who denied their predecessors' concept in regard to the unseen realities and incorporeal objects. Describing the Aristotelian view of Greek philosophy he says: "The philosophers following the Aristotelian thought did not adopt the view held by the earlier masters and precursors of philosophy who believed in the creation of the universe and the existence of a supernatural world apart from the terrestrial one. They had spoken of the celestial world in a language which confirms the description of heaven given in the Traditions. Likewise, the ancients also believed in the resurrection of the dead as the writings of Socrates and some other philosophers affirm."[3]

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1. *Tafsir Sūrah Ikhlās*, page 57
2. *Naqdh ul-Mantiq*, p. 177
3. *Tafsir Sūrah Ikhlās*, p. 69

Aristotle's Rejection of the Spiritual View

Ibn Taimiyah suggests that the older philosophers who had visited Syria and the adjoining lands were influenced by the teachings of the Prophets but Aristotle did not get an opportunity to go outside Greece. In *Naqdh-ul-Mantiq* he writes: "Those who have compiled the history of Philosophy say that the earlier masters like Pathagoras, Socrates and Plato had visited Syria and other countries where they learnt of the spiritual view from the companions and followers of of Luqmān,[1] David and Solomon. But Aristotle never went to the countries where prophets had lived and preached nor did he benefit from the teachings of the prophets in any other way like his predecessors. He subscribed to the cult of star worship and formulated the rationalist view which was blindly accepted by later philosophers."[2]

Modern research leaves no doubt that the whole philosophy of the Arabians was drawn from Aristotelianism and the neo-Platonic thought. Expressing almost the same view, Ibn Taimiyah says, "The philosophical concepts adopted by Al-Farābī (Alpharabius), Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and Suharwardī were wholly borrowed from Aristotle whom these philosophers have named as the 'First Teacher'."[3]

God in Greek Philosophy

Ibn Taimiyah argued that the Aristotelian concept of God reduced Him to a mere imaginary being. "When a man endowed with reason reflects over their concept of God" he says, "he comes to the conclusion that such a God can exist only in one's imagination for He cannot have any objective existence."[4]

Ibn Taimiyah holds that the philosophical concept of God, which divests Him of all virtues, powers and attributes, is not

1. Perhaps Aesop of Greek traditions.
2. *Naqdh-ul-Mantiq*, p. 113
3. *Ar-Raddo'alal-Bakrī*, p. 206
4. *Tafsīr Sūrah Ikhlās*, p. 37

only unbecoming but also derogatory of even a sentient being, much less the Creater and Master of the universe. He laments that the Muslim philosophers subscribing to the Greek philosophic view were simply blind followers of Aristotelianism who overlooked this inherent contradiction of the Greek thought. He deplores that in abjuring their faith in the revealed truth, the philosophers had renounced a blessing from God which would have really lighted their path to the certitude of knowledge.

Critique of Ibn Sina

Ibn Taimiyah severely condemned those philosophers who had tried, following the Aristotelian thought, to explain the metaphysical truths and religious creeds in the light of philosophical concepts. He argued that the unseen realities could not be explained in the light of causal relationship recognised as the guiding principle of Greek thought. Rejecting the view held by such philosophers, Ibn Taimiyah declaimed against Ibn Sīnā who was considered as the chief representative of Aristotelianism among the Muslim philosophers. In a dissertation on 'Prophethood' he cries shame upon Ibn Sīnā who "held the view that of the numerous potentialities of soul which differ among individuals, one is prophethood." Ibn Taimiyah contended: "Only a man completely ignorant of the reality of prophethood can reason in this manner. This is as if a man who is aware only of the poets, tries to prove that the jurists and physicians are also like them. Even this similitude does not fully bring out the absurdity of Ibn Sīnā's reasoning, for, the difference between a prophet and a non-prophet is much more marked and wide than that between the jurists and physicians and the poets. The followers of the Greek philosophers do not possess even a vague notion of the prophethood but they try to afford proof of its existence with the help of philosophical principles which do not possess the remotest idea of its essence and reality."[1]

1. *An-Nabūwāt*, p. 22

In the same book, summing up the views of *Muslim* philosophers about prophethood, he says: "Of all these groups those far away from the substance and reality of prophethood are the followers of Greek philosophy, Batinites and atheists. To them the faculty enjoyed by all human beings and also constituting the basis of prophethood is the vision during sleep. In fact, Aristotle and his immediate followers have not discussed prophethood at all while Al-Farābī considers it simply a kind of dream. There are other philosophers too who subscribe to the same view. Ibn Sīnā assigns it a bit higher status consisting of a threefold characteristic. The first one, which he calls theopneust faculty of the prophets, depends on the development of their understanding without the aid of formal *instruction, but,* he also holds it to be of the same nature as good sense or practical sagacity. The second characteristic of the prophets delineated by Ibn Sīnā is theophany or the faculty to conceive of something known to them, which takes the form of certain celestial forms in their imagination and is experienced through a subjective audition. These sensations resemble the visions in the dreams in which a man beholds others and talks to them but whatever he sees has only a subjective existence for nothing exists besides him. It means that according to these philosophers, whatever a prophet witnesses or hears is purely a subjective phenomenon as nobody else shares his experience. These internal sensations are of an esoteric nature *without any extrinsic* reality. But persons mentally deranged owing to illness or lunacy can also have similar experiences. The third characteristic of the prophets, according to Ibn Sīnā, is the power possessed by them to interpose in the material world which causes events contrary to custom.

"This is thus the explanation of miracles worked by the prophets, for, in their view, every contingent is an emanation from human, celestial or physical forces operating in the world. ....According to the philosophers even the internal experiences of the Prophets proceed from Active Intellect.

"Thus, when these philosophers came to know the teachings

of the prophets, they tried to reconcile these with their own philosophical concepts. For this purpose, they took up the statements of the prophets but interpreted them in the light of their own philosophical doctrines. In other words, their explanations amount to an exposition of philosophy's view-point in the words and phraseology used by the prophets. Employing the expressions and dictions used by the prophets the philosophers have composed numerous treatises and dissertations. Anybody who is not aware of the purpose and design of the prophets and philosophers and the difference between the two, comes to believe that the prophets meant what has been explained by the philosophers. Quite a good number of persons and sects have been misled by these writings. One can clearly discern this duplicity in the works of Ibn Sīnā and his followers."[1]

Critique of Dialectics

The criticism of Ibn Taimiyah was not limited to philosophy and its camp-followers alone : he did not spare even those dialecticians who endeavoured to defend Islam but employed the philosophical doctrines and concepts and its terminology and syllogism to establish the facts of unseen and unknowable reality; for, the philosophical terms tended to impart a limited and incorrect exposition to the transcendental realities owing to their association with the philosophical traditions and precepts. Speaking of the dialecticians, he says in the *An-Nabūwāt* : "The writings of these dialecticians affirming creation, resurrection, Hereafter and the existence of the Creator are neither rationally persuasive nor canonically reassuring, and this has been acknowledged by the dialecticians as well. Imām Rāzī openly confessed when he had grown old that after pondering over the scholastic and philosophical subtleties he had reached the conclusion that these could neither quench one's thirst nor cure the sick. The reasoning of the Qur'ān, he admitted, was the most convincing. Look at the Quranic verses : "*Naught is as*

1. *An-Nabūwāt*, p. 168

His likeness"[1] or "*They cannot compass it in knowledge*,"[2] emphasizing negation of similitudes to God or those affirming His attributes, such as, "*Then (He) mounted the Throne*,"[3] or "*Unto Him good words ascend*"[4] or "*Who is in the Heaven*,"[5] and you would arrive at the same conclusion as reached by al-Rāzi. Ghazālī and Ibn ʿAqeel have also drawn similar inferences for, indeed, this is an incontrovertible truth."[6]

In another passage of the same book Ibn Taimiyah highlights the mistake committed by the dialecticians. "They followed neither the path of the rationalists nor followed the teachings of the prophets with the result that, on the one hand, they deviated from their ingenuous nature, and, on the other, were also deprived of the conviction imparted by the *Sharīʿāh*. Their rationalism led them only to uncertainty and unnecessary quibbling and hairsplitting of imaginary issues."[7]

Another weakness of the scholastics towards which Ibn Taimiyah invited attention was that "when they deliberate upon prophethood they raise weighty objections but their defence is normally weak and unassuring. We have already given many examples of their specious reasoning. Whoever studies their writings to find credence and conviction, holding them up as the defenders and mouthpieces of Islam capable of proving the existence of prophethood on rational grounds. he is unable to get a satisfactory reply in their books. He becomes a victim of scepticism and mental perplexity which bar his way to faith and certitude of knowledge. The doors of doubt, unbelief and ignorance are thus opened for those whose knowledge is limited to the writings of dialecticians."[8]

1. XLII : 11
2. XX : 110
3. XIII : 2
4. XXXV : 10
5. LXVII : 16
6. *An-Nabūwāt*, p. 148
7. *Ibid*,, p. 148
8. *Ibid*. p. 240

A Common Weakness of Philosophers and Dialecticians

In Ibn Taimiyah's opinion both the philosophers as well as the dialecticians had committed a common mistake; since, despite their differences, the mode of their reasoning was the same. Their fundamental weakness, or mistake, was that they tried to achieve that with the help of reason which could never be had through it. In the process they arrayed themselves against natural human disposition as well as the guidance provided by the prophets. "Therefore," observes Ibn Taimiyah, "the findings of both these groups have many mistakes but little benefit to offer."[1]

The mode of reasoning employed by the philosophers and scholastics was, according to Ibn Taimiyah, extravagantly formal and elaborate with the result that they had to adopt a lengthy and roundabout method for establishing those facts which could have been proved easily by taking to a simpler but unsophisticated course more appealing to human intellect. He disagreed with the dialecticians that the logical syllogism was the only satisfactory method of reasoning to be applied by them.

He argued that even if the premises of their reasoning were sometimes correct, they were not fundamental because experience and study of human nature shows that God has made it easy for man to understand what is essential for him to learn. For that very reason, there are ample signs, indications and evidences of the existence and oneness of the Creator and the prophethood of His apostles, and so are the means to attain the knowledge about them. There were, however, certain persons, said Ibn Taimiyah, who had a flair for logical syllogism and argumentation but for others it was quite unnecessary.[2]

The Quranic reasoning

Ibn Taimiyah strongly pleaded that the Quranic reasoning

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1. *Naqdh-ul-Mantiq*, p. 162
2. *Ar-Raddo'alal Mantaqiyīn*, p. 255

was not only most appropriate but also most convincing for the avouchment of metaphysical and unseen realities and religious truths. "The arguments put forth by the Qur'ān," writes Ibn Taimiyah, "are much more assuring and carry a deeper sense than the propositions of the philosophers and dialecticians. At the same time, the former do not suffer from paralogism which is a common feature of logical disputations."[1] At another place he says, "Knowledge of the reasons advanced by the Qur'ān as well as the self-evident marks and signs adduced in support of the existence of God, His sustentation of the world, His Oneness, His knowledge and power and the possibility of resurrection and retribution in the Hereafter is essential for acquiring the noblest human qualities."[2]

In support of his contention he cites the example of the different forms of reasoning employed in support of the existence of Divine Being and His attributes which also bring out the difference between the philosophical and Quranic concepts of Godhead. "The Qur'ān is elaborate where it affirms Divine attributes but makes only a compendious reference where the negation is stressed (*Naught is as His likeness*) : this being also the way of the prophets who explicate in detail what *He is* and are concise in describing what *He is not*. On the other hand, their rivals and opponents (The Greek philosophers) pay more attention to the denial of His attributes but make only a passing reference where they have to aver them."[3]

The writings of the Greek philosophers and their votaries avouch the point made out by Ibn Taimiyah. In fact, the pains taken by the philosophers to deny the positive attributes of God have reduced His Being to an imaginary and impotent entity. But, what God is, what knowledge and power He possesses— there are not more than a few words or few philosophical terms to be found in their entire work. And, as a result of it, all

1. *Ar-Raddo'alal Mantaqiyīn*, p. 321
2. *Ibid.*, p. 150
3. *Ibid.*, p. 153

those who had been inspired by that philosophy in Greece and outside it, have never developed any conscious relationship with God expressing itself in their intellectual ideals and moral aspirations or a heartfelt longing for His propinquity. This has been so because a waking consciousness of God can be created only through His names, attributes and manifestations indicating positive characteristics but the philosophy insists on the negation of His qualities. The history of man's intellectual development bears witness to the fact that man has never been enamoured of anyone about whose person and character he has had no knowledge. Every human affection going out to some other person or object, whether it is love or fear, hope or disappointment, is directed only to known persons or characteristics while philosophy insists on the denial of Divine attributes. The historians of religion and morals are unanimous that the ancient Greeks were not known for their devotion to God or religious genius—their religious experience had in fact no depth and substance worth the name. In the words of Ibn Taimiyah this was because "a hundred thousand negations could never be equal to a single affirmation." No religious structure can, in fact, be built on the foundations of denial alone. And that is why Greek philosophy in the West and Buddhism in the East failed to reconstruct a society whose corner stone was a heart-felt sentience of God. Both these succumbed to idolatry and atheism because the inherent human propensities of faith and conviction, devotion and love can never be satisfied by any epistemology involving intellectual wrangling and forgeries of the brain.

Disconcerting Influence of Greek Logic

In order to demonstrate the fallacious bases of logic purely on rational grounds, Ibn Taimiyah subjected its premises to a close scrutiny in the same way as he had critically examined its counterpart, the philosophy. The Greek logic had, in fact captured the heart of the Arabs even more powerfully than the philosophy of the Greeks. According to Ṣā'īd Qartabī the

writings of the Greek philosophers on logic were being zealously studied by the Arabs as early as the third century of Islamic era. By the beginning of the fifth century these had been accorded such a pride of place in the Arab curriculum that even Al-Ghazālī was carried away by it. He considered logic to be the basic discipline of all sciences. In the introduction of his well-known book *al-Mustafā* he remarks that 'logic constitutes the fundamental discipline in every branch of knowledge. Anybody who is not well-versed in this science, can never be sure of the knowledge gained by him."[1] In *Maqāsid-i-Falāsifah* he observes : "So far as the logical permises and its *a priori* principles are concerned, most of them are undoubtedly tested and true. Only seldom is there any mistake in them. Whatever differences the doctors of faith have with the Greek masters of logic, these relate to the terminology used by the two without any divergence of opinion in regard to its aims and objectives. All are agreed that this science is meant to reach conclusions by connected thought."[2]

Ibn Rushd, who held Aristotle in the highest esteem, considered logic to be the worthiest knowledge attainable by human beings and the measuring rod of one's excellence. "Logic", he said, "opened the way to reality which could not be reached without its help even by the elite, much less the laity."[3]

Philosophy had been attacked by different scholars from time to time but nobody had undertaken a rational evaluation of logic before Ibn Taimiyah. He was thus the first scholar to subject this branch of knowledge to a minute and critical study and express his independent opinion about it. First he wrote a small treatise entitled *Naqdh-ul-Mantiq* and thereafter another detailed dissertation under the title of *Ar-Raddoᶜalal-Mantaqīyīn* in which he discussed logical propositions like prosyllogism, major, minor and middle terms, conclusions, etc. and showed

1. *Al-Mustafā*, p. 10
2. *Maqāsid-i-Falāsafah*, p. 3
3. *Muhammad Lutfī Jamᶜah*, pp. 120-121

their defects and limitations to demonstrate that the importance accorded to logic by the Muslim scholars was far in excess of its real worth. In the opinion of Ibn Taimiyah it was neither the measuring rod of rationality nor its method of reasoning provided the surest way to attain credence, nor yet true knowledge. He writes, "These scholars claim that logic constitutes the criterion of discursive knowledge which saves one from committing mistakes in the same way as the rules of meter and rhyme help in lyrical composition or the etymology and syntax in the learning of a language or else mechanical instruments in ascertaining the hours of the day. But this is not correct, for, the knowledge is achieved through perception and rational faculty endowed to human beings by God. Its acquisition does not depend on the rules formulated by another person. It might be necessary to imitate the Arabs for learning Arabic language for the simple reason that it is the dialect of a nation which has to be heard and copied, but that cannot be true of discursive knowledge...... The people before the inception of Greek logic possessed knowledge about the reality of things; likewise there have been nations after it which have endeavoured to reach the truth of the matter without taking its help. Among every nation one can find sages who reach the core of realities without learning Aristotelian logic. A little reflection by these people would convince them that they attained the knowledge possessed by them without recource to this man-made science."[1]

Much ado about nothing

Ibn Taimiyah pointed out quite a few weaknesses and defects of syllogistic logic. He held the view that it produced a vain and argumentative disposition, a copious and flexible idiom, and supplied the logicians with a set of pompous words and terminology which actually meant nothing. In the words of Ibn Taimiyah the endeavour of the logicians amounted to mere "waste of time and energy, and unnecessary mental

1. *Ar-Raddo'alal Mantaqiyīn*, pp. 27-28

exercise and bragging which led people to useless disputation."[1] He described these verbal engagements as much ado about nothing. Another ill-effect of excessive logical ratiocination according to Ibn Taimiyah was that the logicians too often become "incapable of expressing their ideas freely. It bridles their tongue and pen by restraining them from exercising their minds independently."[2] "It is a general rule that with wider concepts and free thinking," observed Ibn Taimiyah, "the expression becomes uninhibited but the strait-laced thinking, as the logicians are wont to resort, makes their mind and tongue circumscribed by narrower limits and enchains their concept and imagination. It is because of these restraints that those logicians who are more intelligent take to a circuitous course of reasoning. Their only achievement is to express some known fact more explicitly but the habit of thinking hedged in by logical premises imparts a perverse bias of mind inclining towards scepticism and incredulity. Those not betaking the course of logicians are saved from these dangers."[3]

Ibn Taimiyah acknowledged that there were a few exceptions to it among the logicians as, for example, Ibn Sīnā whose writings exhibited remarkable eloquence and flexibility. This was because he did not adopt the literary style of earlier logicians laden with obscurities.

Logic was taken by the dialecticians as an instrument to develop the unknown or metaphysical truths from the known concepts practically in the same way as the fundamental rules and principles of other sciences are employed to acquire further knowledge in those subjects. It is worthy of notice that Ibn Taimiyah did not admit this proposition. "It is clear that the scales designed to weigh fire-wood, metals and stones cannot be used for weighing silver and gold. The truth enunciated by

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1. *Ar-Raddo'alal Mantaqiyin*, p. 31
2. *Ibid.*, p. 194
3. *Ibid.*, p. 167

the prophets and the reality of prophethood is even finer and more precious than gold is considered among the metals. Your logic cannot, therefore, be employed as a balance for the latter because it comprises both human ignorance and extremism. It is neither aware of their weights and measures nor it is capable of describing them. This is a science of ignorance for it denies that which is truth ; and breeds extremism and obstinacy for it rejects that which is indispensable as well as inherent in human nature. No science can do without these imperative truths for human excellence and nobility depend on them."[1]

Another scholar of the ninth century who clearly understood the inadequacies of reason arrived at a similar conclusion. In his 'Introduction to the World History' Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 A.H.) observed : "The mind is an accurate scale whose recordings are certain and reliable, but to use it to weigh questions relating to the Unity of God, or the after-life, or the nature of prophecy, or the divine qualities, or other such subjects falling outside its range, is like trying to use a goldsmith's scale to weigh mountains. This does not mean that the scale is in itself inaccurate. The truth of the matter is that mind has limits within which it is rigidly confined ; it cannot therefore hope to comprehend God and His qualities, itself being only one of the many atoms created by God."[2]

Ibn Taimiyah's Contribution to Logic

Far from being negative, Ibn Taimiyah's attitude towards logic was reasonably sensible as well as constructive. He agreed that a part of it was not only correct and useful but even instinctive to a man endowed with reason. At the same time he contended that it also included falacious arguments which were not needed at all.[3] He did not agree with those

1. *Nuqdh-al-Mantiq*, p. 164
2. *Muqaddamah Ibn Khaldūn*, p. 473
3. *Ar-Raddo'alal Mantaqiyīn*, p. 201

who thought that the logical principles, as adumbrated by the masters of yore, enshrined the wisdom that was above criticism. On the one hand, his criticism of logic opened the way to its evaluation on rational grounds, while, on the other, he contributed to its development by working out complete and precise definitions and new standpoints almost untouched by his predecessors. Ibn Taimiyah argued with severity against the syllogism of Aristotle that proceeded from general principles, but he preferred the inductive method of reasoning which he held to be an easier and surer way of attaining certain knowledge. Ibn Taimiyah set himself to work out several new theories and propositions, as stated by Syed Sulaimān Nadwī in his introduction to the *Ar-Raddoʿalal Mantaqīyīn*. He writes: "If you go through this book carefully you would find several discussions on philosophical and logical issues which have been touched upon for the first time by Ibn Taimiyah. Some of his views are in harmony with the analysis of the reasoning process put forth by the western philosophers. To give an example, all the earlier Muslim philosophers had followed the Aristotelian view that the universals form the basis of knowledge, and, for that reason, they had all disregarded the particulars and inductive process of reasoning. Certain western writers claim that Mill was the first philosopher to lay the foundation of modern logic by formulating the principles of inductive reasoning (although Ibn Taimiyah had worked these out hundreds of years before Mill).

"The way Ibn Taimiyah analysed and amplified the intricate problems relating to denotation of terms, genus, division, causal connection, syllogism, inductive process and *a priori* reasoning and proved the validity of the views set forth by him bear witness to the agility of his mind. So far as the theory of causal connection is concerned, he brought out exactly the same doctrine as propounded later on by Hume in his writings. As everybody knows the doctrine of causation is one of those difficult problems of philosophy which has made many a mind to falter from the right path and led them to scepticism and

agnosticism. This book contains a number of enquiries which speak volumes of Ibn Taimiyah's intellectual gifts and literary attainments."[1]

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1. *Ar-Radde'alal Manteqiyin*, p. 3

VII

Refutation of Christianity and Shiaism

Ibn Taimiyah spent his whole life fighting those un-Islamic beliefs and ideas which were making inroads in Islam from within and without. Of these only two, Christianity and Shiᶜaism, are mentioned here since he has left two full-fledged works for their refutation. Perhaps Ibn Taimiyah had to give more attention to these two because being well organised and vigorous, they posed a greater threat to orthodox Islam than others.

The weakening of the Islamic kingdoms alongwith the dislocation in the Muslim intellectual life produced first, by the long drawn crusades, and then by the onslaught of Tartar hordes, had given heart to the Christians to re-assert the supremacy of their religion against the Islamic faith. The objections raised by the Christians against Islam, who invited Muslims to polemical disputations, were met by the Muslim theologians but the immediate cause for Ibn Taimiyah's response to the threat from that quarter was a new book written in Cyprus. It attempted to establish the superiority of Christianity over Islam through rational as well as theological arguments and tended to show that the prophethood of Muhammad was not universal but limited to the Arabs only.

Al-Jawāb ul-Sabīh

Ibn Taimiyah wrote *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahīh liman baddola Dīn-il*

Masīh in four volumes in which he adequately met all the objections raised against Islam, adduced entirely new and satisfying arguments in support of the prophethood of Muhammad, quoted the prophecies about him contained in the Bible, traced the history of Christian church and its scholasticism and examined the varying interpretations of the Christian faith as expounded by the church fathers from time to time. In the words of a modern critic and biographer, Sheikh Abū Zahrā, "this book alone is sufficient to carve out a place for him among the thinkers and learned doctors who endeavoured to revivify the faith."[1]

Ibn Taimiyah was the first among Muslim writers who turned to the historical criticism of Christianity to show how the spiritual experiences of the early Christian community were moulded by the mythological beliefs and idolatrous practices of the Romans. He says, "The Christians have combined two religions—one preached by the prophets and the other belonging to pagans—into one. A part of their religion consists of the teachings of the prophets while the rest of it is derived from the creeds and practices of the heathens. It this way they have introduced mythological abstractions which are nowhere to be found in the prophetic scriptures. In the place of graven images casting shadows they have introduced anthropomorphic figures which do not spread any shadow. They began offering prayers facing the sun, moon and the stars and started keeping fast during autumn with the object of uniting their religious observances with the animistic cults."[2]

Prevalent Christianity

Ibn Taimiyah maintained that the virgin purity of the Christian church was violated first by St. Paul and then again in the fourth century of the Christian era during the reign of Constantine. He says that "their prelates and bishops continu-

1. *Abū Zahrā*, p. 519
2. *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahīh*, p. 199

ously went on formulating and evolving the Christian creed and canon as, for example, 318 bishops prepared during the reign of Constantine a copious creed. This credal declaration showered invectives on Arius and others who did not subscribe to it, and contained statements which were not to be found in the scriptures. It rather had those terms and definitions which were against the teaching of the revealed books and even against sound reasoning."[1]

"In this formulary of episcopal consent," continues Ibn Taimiyah, "they did not follow Jesus Christ or the earlier prophets but produced an entirely new credal statement which cannot be traced to the teachings of the prophets. In the sermons of Jesus Christ or other prophets, neither there is any mention of the equality of three or more Divine Persons, nor of three co-eternal substances having Divine Essence. Nowhere in the scriptures any attribute or essence of God is spoken of as Logos or the Son of God, nor is there any mention of the Holy Ghost. Nor is there any assertion that God has begotten a Son who possesses all the inherent perfections appropriate to the Supreme Being, or who is composed of Divine Essence and is also a creator like God. Expressions like these, susceptible of heretical sense, are not to be found in the utterances of any prophet."[2]

Rank and Worth of the Gospels

Muslim theologians often made the mistake of equating New Testament with the Qur'ān by assigning it the position of a revealed scripture. Ibn Taimiyah held the view that the books included in the New Testament are merely a narrative of certain sayings and acts of Jesus Christ like the biographical accounts of the life of the Prophet of Islam left by Muslim historians or, at the most, these can be equated with the records of Traditions which are not considered equivalent to the Qur'ān in worth

1. *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahih*, Vol. I. p. 18
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 134

and authority.[1] Elucidating his point of view he says: "The Christians acknowledge the fact that the books of Gospel they possess today were neither written by Jesus Christ nor were these composed under his guidance. These were written after the ascension of Jesus by Matthew and John, who were his disciples, and Mark and Luke, who had not even seen him. The accounts of the life of Jesus Christ narrated therein were not remembered and handed down by such a large number of persons as to make them of unimpeachable authority. Even the authors of these books admit that they have narrated only a part of the sayings and actions of Jesus Christ and have not attempted to give the entire account of his life. Narration of any fact by two, three or four persons only is always liable to contain some mistakes; one conspicuous mistake these narrators have made is about the person actually crucified. This makes their account doubtful."[2]

In Taimiyah goes a step further and claims that "the books of Old Testament were put into writing over a period of time with long gaps. The Jewish traditions tell us that after the destruction of the Temple and wholesale dispersal of the Jews from Palestine, the final version of the Pentateuch or Torah was got written by Ezra about whom there is a dispute whether he was a prophet or not."[3]

Speaking of the difference between the Qur᾽ān and the Bible Ibn Taimiyah says: "The text of the Qur᾽ān as well as its meaning have been transmitted by very many persons in every age and have always been accepted as authentic and genuine without any doubt having been ever raised by anybody. Similarly, Muslims have received the accounts of the person and actions of their Prophet through distinct sources whose authenticity can be judged in different ways as, for example, unbroken chain of narrators, consistent testimony of the Muslims, circumstantial evidence, etc. Enshrined in the hearts of

1. *Al-Jawāb ul-Sahih*, Vol. I, p. 10
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 368
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 368

Muslims, the Qur'ān has not to depend for its existence on the written pages alone. If, God forbid, all the copies of the Qur'ān were to be lost, it could still be reproduced from memory but, if the Bible were to disappear, there would be no continuous reproduction of its text. The Christians have hardly anyone who has learnt the entire Bible by heart and whatever is memorised by some is not trustworthy. Their scriptures have been subjected to editing and interpolation ever since these were handed down by the apostles and that is why the Christians could not preserve the chain of their narrators. Nor have they evolved the canons for reception and rejection of their traditions or the dictionary of the narrators like the Muslims."[1]

Corruption of the Bible

It is generally believed that Ibn Taimiyah did not subscribe to the view of total corruption of the Biblical text, which, he held, was also not the Muslims belief. In his opinion the Christian and Jewish scriptures have been edited by their priests and redactors from time to time which has materially altered the sense carried by the original text.[2]

The Mistake of the Christians

Ibn Taimiyah maintained that the inability of the Christians to fully comprehend the language and message of the prophets, in which figurative descriptions and expressions were used, led them to accept Trinity which violates the prophetic concept of monotheism. Citing an example in support of his contention he says, "The writings of the people possessing revealed scriptures show that the prophets of yore had used the words 'father' and 'son' but they meant God by the former and one nearer to God by the latter. Nobody has stated that any prophet ever used the word 'son' for an attribute of God nor claimed that such an attribute was begotten by God. To assert that by the word 'son' occurring

1. *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahih*, Vol. II. pp. 12-13
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 373-380 and Vol. II, p. 4

in the phrase 'Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost',[1] Jesus meant that he was co-equal and co-eternal with the Divine Essence is to charge him with a blatant calumny. Similarly, the attribute of God referring to His life was never expressed as Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. In the terminology used by the prophets holy spirit stood for the thing or being descending with Divine grace and strength on the prophets and pious souls."[2]

In another passage addressed to the Christians he says, "You would admit that the word 'son' has been used for others too besides Jesus Christ. You see Jesus Christ speaking of 'My Father and your Father,'[3] 'Father which is in Heaven,'[4] and 'my God and your God'[5] and that his disciples were 'all filled with the Holy Ghost'.[6] Likewise, in the Torah you have one finds God asking Moses: "Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel *is* my son, *even* my firstborn: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, *even* thy firstborn.'[7] The Torah further says: 'And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that *is* behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.'[8] Thus the Torah speaks of entire Bani Israel as the son of God and all the people of Egypt as the son of Pharaoh. It includes even the sons of beasts amongst the son of Pharaoh. In the Book of Psalms God says to David: 'Thou *art* my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give *three*.' Again, the

1. *Matt*, 28 : 19
2. *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahīh*, Vol. III, pp. 181-182
3. John, 20 : 17
4. *Matt*, 6 : 1
5. John, 20 : 17
6. Act, 2 : 4
7. Ex. 4 : 22-23
8. Ex. 11 :.5
9. Ps 2 : 7-8

New Testament says that Jesus told his disciples, 'I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I'[1] and exhorted them to pray thus: 'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name,............Give us this day our daily bread.'[2] In the same way the Holy Ghost did not descend on Christ alone, there are others as well who were filled with the Holy Spirit."[4]

Ibn Taimiyah then adds "In short, neither in the earlier prophecies nor in the scriptures such as Torah, Psalms or New Testament there is anything to show that the Divine Spirit had transfused into Jesus Christ or that he had an indwelling effulgence of God's glory as the Christians believe. There is nothing in these scriptures to justify Jesus being regarded as the Son of God, in an exclusive or unique sense. In reality he was no more than what the Qur'ān says: 'The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a Messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him.'[5] The fact is that thc scriptures granted to earlier prophets and their prophecies confirm what the Prophet of Islam told us about them. Each one of them, indeed, ratifies the other. As for the predictions quoted by tne Christians in support of the supernatural virtue and power of Jesus Christ, all these signs and prophecies can be applied to others besides Jesus Christ. Therefore, to appeal to these oracles for establishing the divinity of Jesus Christ is completely unwarranted. The words, such as, the son, Messiah, descent of or being filled with Holy Spirit or being addressed as the Lord are expressions used in the scriptures for others too and so none of these expressions prove that Jesus Christ possessed the perfections appropriate to the Supreme Being."[6]

The evangelistic theologians very often take resort to the

1. John 14 : 28
2. *Matt*, 6 : 9-11
3. Acts 2 : 4
4. *Al-Jawāb ul-Sahih*, Vol. III, pp. 185-186
5. Q. IV : 171
6. *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahih*, Vol. II, pp. 189-190

mysterious arguments derived from the Platonic concepts of the Logos and the soul or spirit of the universe to prove the subtle questions covering the nature, distinction and equality of the three divine persons. Ibn Taimiyah refuted all these arguments by showing, in accordance with the principles of syllogistic logic and philosophical concepts, that none of their presumptions justifies the remotest implications of their opinion. Being unable to establish the truth of mysterious doctrines which could satisfy a rational mind, the Christian apologists try to draw a veil of sanctity over their enigmatical beliefs. They assert that the doctrine of Trinity being embedded in their Scripture, it is incumbent on them to have faith in it, and it is impious to doubt its authenticity, for, these are abstruse questions of infinite reality beyond the reach of limited understanding possessed by the human beings. But Ibn Taimiyah points out that this argument is equally fallacious. "The Christian theologians fail to distinguish," observes Ibn Taimiyah, "the things which reason holds as ridiculous and contrary to reason or rather impossible from those which it cannot comprehend or cannot pronounce its verdict in regard to their nature and existence. The apostles of God have really informed us only about the matters falling in the second category, since, the things belonging to the former category cannot simply form part of the message brought by them. These pretenders of knowledge could not make any distinction between the facts revealed and the incomprehensible mysteries which elude our enquiry. They decided to compete with the polytheists who had invented an associate of God and a son for Him."[1]

Ibn Taimiyah argued cogently to show that revelation never contradicts the facts acceptable to the normal process of thought. This also, in his opinion, brought out the basic difference between Islam and Christianity. Islam, he said, accepted certain facts of mute reality which were beyond the ken of senses but not against reason. On the other hand,

1. *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahīh*, Vol. II, p. 89

Christianity subscribed to the doctrines which were irrational. The Christian theologians agreed that these were reasonless but they also *insisted on their acceptance* by *holding them as* revealed facts beyond human comprehension.

Early Followers of Christianity

In this book Ibn Taimiyah also gave an account of those sects of early Christianity who had faith in the Unity of Supreme Being and revered Jesus as a prophet and servant of God but which could not flourish due to a variety of reasons. The doctrinal subtleties separating different Christian factions described minutely by Ibn Taimiyah show how deeply he had studied that religion.

Prophecies about the Last Prophet

Ibn Taimiyah listed all the prophecies of the Old and the New Testaments concerning the advent of the Last Prophet. He explained the significance of the oracles attributed to Isiah, Habakkuk, Daniel and Jesus which could be appealed to foretell the coming of the Prophet of Islam.[1] To give an example, the prophecy contained in John 14 : 30 wherein Jesus is reported to have said : "Hereafter I will not talk much with you ; for the prince of the world cometh, and hath nothing in me" was explained by him to show how it referred to the Prophet of Islam. "The word *prince*", says Ibn Taimiyah, "occurring in this passage is a translation of Hebrew *arkūn* which means 'glorious', 'illustrious', 'august' and 'high in dignity'." Dwelling further upon this passage he adds "since it is a manifest and accepted fact, everbody would agree that Muhammad was the only Prophet after Jesus whose temporal and spiritual leadership has been acknowledged by the world. People obeyed him with all their heart and soul. During his life time and after his death, in all times and climes, in the East and the West his followers have yielded obediently to his commands. Allegiance

1. *Al-Jawab-us-Sahih*, Vol. III, p. 265 to Vol. IV, p 20

is owed to the sovereigns during their life-time alone for, as the saying goes, authority forgets a dying king; but for religion such an allegiance is valueless. The spirit of reverence and implicit submission elicited by the Prophets is even above the fear of chastisement and hope of reward in the Hereafter."

"Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) brought to light the true faith of the prophets of yore, confirmed the message brought by them and exalted their names. It was on account of him that several nations acknowledged Moses and Jesus as the prophets of God. Even amongst those who had faith in the revealed scriptures, there were wide differences; they slandered David and Solomon and did not know many other prophets like Hūd, Sālih and Shuaᶜib."[1]

Signs of Prophethood

In order to assert the prophethood of Muhammad, Ibn Taimiyah discussed the miracles worked by the Prophet. He did not, however, mention only the miracles recorded in the Traditions and biographies of the Prophet but also dealt extensively with the definition and nature of miracles, and extended their scope, according to the Quranic vocabulary, to include the signs which make visible and confirm the truth of prophethood. In forming an estimate of the character of the Holy Prophet he maintained that "all these, his character and deportment, his sayings and his actions constitute a miracle, as do his canons and his followers, their way of life and piety. The pure-hearted among his followers are the signs and wonders in support of his apostleship."[2]

Concerning the universality of Muhammad's prophethood, he explained the significance and merits of the beliefs, doctrines and canons of Islam, which, he claimed, are complete and satisfy the principles furnished by reason. There is nothing founded on the data of reason which has been disallowed by

1, *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahīh*, Vol. IV, pp. 86-87
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 187

the Prophet of Islam and nothing against the dictates of reason which was upheld by him. The Book revealed to him corrected, completed and superseded the earlier scriptures while the *Shari^cah* brought by him incorporated all the guidance provided by the prophets of yore.[1] Ibn Taimiyah brought forth a series of cogent reasons to prove that anyone who believed in the prophethood of any apostle of God could not deny the prophetic mission of Muhammad ; for, whatever reasons he would adduce for the prophethood of any one of these messengers of God, they would equally apply to the last Prophet also. Similarly, the denial of the prophethood of Muhammad, for whatever reason it might be, would lead one to deny the apostleship of all other prophets.[2]

Ibn Taimiyah did not overlook the argument often preferred by the Christians that Muhammad was a prophet to his countrymen alone. He devoted more than 200 pages of the first part of *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahīh*[3] to refute this assertion. He quoted the scriptures to show that it was essential for all men to believe in the mission of Muhammad. He also dwelt upon the grand object of divine revelation which intended to show mankind, through the apostleship of Muhammad, the right path of salvation and to bring forth all that is noble and good in man.

Minhaj-us-Sunnah

Like *Al-Jawāb-Al-Sahīh, Minhāj-us-Sunnah* is another work of distinctive merit by Ibn Taimiyah, which he wrote to refute the Shi^caite schism, then posing a threat to the integrity of orthodox faith. The book consisting of four volumes and covering 1214 pages, was written in reply to *Minhāj-ul-Karāhmah* of Ibn-ul-Mutahhir al-Hillī who had, in his excessive zeal to prove the divinely ordained office of *Imāmat*, tried to make out the first three

1 *Al-Jawāb-us-Sahīh*, Vol. IV, pp. 81-82
2. *Ibid.*, Vol I, p. 180
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 28-230

right-guided Caliphs not merely hypocrites and imposters but also the vilest creatures steeped in inequity. This, according to Ibn Taimiyah, discredited Islam and made the concept of prophethood untenable. Despite its polemical nature the *Minhāj-us-Sunnah* is remarkable for the sobriety of its style and the pursuit of details and accuracy.

Vilification of the Prophet's Companions

Discussing the logical result of the Shiᶜaite denigration of the Prophet's companions, Ibn Taimiyah observes[1]: "The followers of the Prophet of Islam constitue the best of people and the worthiest in excellence and merit among them were those who first embraced Islam. But the picture drawn by these slanderers shows that the earliest Muslims had neither any inkling of the Truth nor they followed it faithfully; since, according to the Shiᶜāhs, most of them, particularly the first three Caliphs knowingly opposed the teachings of the Prophet. All the companions, they say, followed these tyrants because they did not possess those intellectual faculties which are required for discernment of the true path of Islam. Now, it is not difficult to conceive how lustful and power-hungry, unenlightened and mindless men the companions and Caliphs were according to Shiᶜāhs. They charge the Caliphs of laying a claim to the Caliphate to look after their own interests. Thus, all the followers of the Prophet went astray by forsaking the path of Truth. If this view is accepted, the Jews and the Christians would, of a fact, be better than the Muslims for God bears a testimoney in the Qur'ān that "of the Moses' folk there is a community who lead with truth and establish justice therewith."[2] The Prophet has foretold that of more than seventy factions of the Jews and Christians, only one would qualify for salvation but if we accept the Shiᶜaite view there would not be a single sect among the Muslims which could be deemed as the

1. *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, Val. I, p. 152
2. Q. VII : 159

standard bearer of Truth and Justice. If the best in faith among the Muslims were so depraved, what can be said of those coming after them? Does it not prove that the Jews and the Christians are better even after the corruption of their scriptures and faith, and worthier than those about whom God has said: *Ye are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind.*"[1]

Ibn Taimiyah quotes Imām Shu'ebī to show that even the Jews and Christians hold their prophets in greater reverence than the Shi'āhs do. He says, "Asked to indicate the purest in faith among them, the Jews replied that the Elders accompanying Moses and their followers were the noblest believers. In reply to a similar question the Christians said that the disciples of Jesus Christ were the most pious amongst them. But when the Shi'āhs were required to suggest the most profane and irreligious amongst Muslims they pointed out to the companions of the Prophet of Islam. Ah! They were commanded to invoke blessings of God on these pious souls but what they are doing is to curse and swear at them."[2]

Denigration of the Companions

Ibn Taimiyah pointed out that the predisposing cause responsible for the Shi'āhs standing apart from and almost in hostile attitude to the rest of Islam lay in the impassible bitterness harboured by them towards the first three Caliphs, in particular, and the majority of Prophet's companions, in general. The denigration of the early precursors of Islam by them is really a cloak for their hostility to the Prophet whose life-long labour could not, in their opinion, win over even a handful of sincere followers. The stand taken by the Shi'āhs, says Ibn Taimiyah, also bespeaks of the inability of the Prophet to forewarn the Muslims about the secret designs of the hypocrites and the events that followed immediately after his death although he had made predictions about things that were to take place

1. Q. III : 110
2. *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, Vol. I, p. 6

hundreds of years after him. Not only that, the respect and confidence of the Prophet enjoyed by his eminent companions shows that either the Prophet could not foresee the danger for the future of Islam or had put a false appearance upon his outward behaviour towards them. In either case, it would be difficult to justify his action as behoving the dignity of a prophet." "Thus", concluded Ibn Taimiyah"[1] *only those would vilify the eminent companions* who either nourished a secret feeling of ill-will against Islam and its Prophet, like the originator of Shiʿāism and the leaders of the Bātinite movement, or, the unenlightened folk prodded by their selfish desires and ignorance, as generally are the rank and file of the Shiʿā schism."

Excellence of the Companions

Ibn Taimiyah did not claim that the *companions of the* Prophet of Islam *were without a spot or* blemish or were not liable *to sin* like the apostles of God. He, however, did assert that being the most pious and pure of heart in the entire community, they were just, God-fearing, truthful, sincere and upright. If they ever committed a sin, they repented and strenuously tried to atone for their mistakes through prayers and fasting and virtuous actions. Their virtues and merits outweighed their faults. Explaining his view-point he says,[2] "We have already stated that we do not hold that there was anybody impeccable after the Prophet of Islam, much *less his not forming* a wrong opinion *in juristic matters*. The writ of God runs for *them*:

"And whoso bringeth the truth and believeth therein—such are the dutiful.

"They shall have what they will of their Lord's bounty. That is the reward of the good:

"That Allāh will remit from them the worst of what

1. *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, Vol. IV, p. 123
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. III. p. 238

they did, and will pay them for reward the best they used to do."[1]

Ibn Taimiyah has succinctly brought out the unreasonable ness of the Shiʿāhs in regard to the companions of the Prophet of Islam. To borrow his words: "The companions were, regardless of their human shortcomings, the best group of persons among the Muslims by virtue of their faith and righteousness. Their deficiencies would appear insignificant if we were to compare their morals and behaviour with the comportment of the followers of other faiths. Actually the fault lies with those who can see a black stain on a white sheet but are unable to detect the white scratch on a black bedspread. This is, in fact, a great injustice as well as foolishness, for, one can easily find out the merit and worthiness of the companions by comparing them with those known for their purity of faith and morals amongst the followers of other religions. How far the standard set by these persons can be deemed to be just if they visualise a criterion of righteousness unattainable by man? If someone pictures to oneself of an impeccable Imām or a religious teacher who, sometimes not even named as an Imām, is not liable to err, and demands that every learned man, religious teacher, ruler or king, notwithstanding his erudition, temperance and the virtuous deeds performed by him, should be a replica of that ideal; whose knowledge should compass all the hidden mysteries of nature, who should be an acme of perfection free from all human shortcomings and who should never let his angry passions rise; then, nothing can be done to deliver such a man from the fantasy of his mind. There are, in truth, many amongst them who endue their Imāms with cardinal virtues not possessed even by the apostles of God."[2]

At another place he writes[3] "Any one who has studied the history of various religions would know that there has never

1. Q. XXXIX: 33-35
2. *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, Vol. III, p. 241
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 242

been a group of persons more pious and devout and more mindful of avoiding schism and breach in religion than the companions of the Prophet. These were the persons about whom God has said : 'Ye are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah."[1]

"Whatever goodness and virtues Muslims shall possess to the end of time", adds Ibn Taimiyah, "whether it be the Faith or the Qur'ān, knowledge or prayers, entry in Paradise or protection against Hell, ascendency over non-believers or glorification of God, it shall all be the fruit of earnest efforts made by the companions of the Prophet who preached the religion and fought in the way of God. Every man who embraces Islam shall lie under an obligation to them till the Doomsday. Even the virtues, the Shiʿāhs and others have, are the gifts from the companions, who, in turn, were inspired by the right-guided Caliphs; for the latter were the fount of all the blessings whether of this world or the next."[2]

Caliphate of Abū Bakr

Election of Abū Bakr to the office of caliphate has been the greatest bone of contention between the Shiʿāhs and Sunnīs. Explaining the significance of the elective principle regulating the appointment of the Caliphs, Ibn Taimiyah observes: "It is worthy of note that the caliphate of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar is really a sign of the perfection of divinely-appointed prophethood of Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him). They furnish a proof that he was not a king but an apostle of God; for the kings always prefer to pass on the sceptre of authority to their nearest relations. To the kings this is an essential step to save their kingdom (from falling into the hands of others). So we also see the rulers and governors around us acting in a similar manner. The Saljukids and the

1. Q. III: 110
2. *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, Vol. III, p. 245

Sultāns of Syria and Yeman pass on their kingdoms to their kith and kin, and this has been the practice followed by the Christian and heathen kings as well. The kings of the Franks and those belonging to the progeny of Chenghiz Khān always ensure that the kingship remains within their family. They are always mindful whether the successor is of their family and blood or not. But, disregarding this universal practice, the Prophet did not nominate his uncle ʿAbbās or his cousin ʿAlī or ʿAqīl or another relation like Rabīʿa ibn al-Hārith ibn ʿAbdul Muttalib or Abū Sufyān ibn al-Hārith ibn ʿAbdul Muttalib as his successor, and this shows that the Prophet was not guided by the regal precepts and conventions. Besides the relatives already named, there were also ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, Khalid ibn Saʿeed ibn al-ʿAas, Abān ibn Saʿeed ibn al-ʿAas and others belonging to Banū ʿAbd Munāf—the most respected clan of the Quraish and nearest to the family of the Prophet—but none of them was nominated to succeed him. This proves that Muhammad was a prophet and slave of God and not a king. He never bestowed his favour on anybody merely on account of the nobility of blood or relationship with him but conferred his blessings only on grounds of one's faith and piety. This was an indication for his followers that they shall not endeavour to establish the rule of any clan or family but uphold the kingdom of God on earth. They were not to follow even those prophets of yore who had been granted kingship by God because Muhammad was allowed to choose between kingship and the slavery of the Lord and he chose to remain a slave and a prophet. The caliphate of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar was thus a consummation of his teachings. Had he nominated someone of his own household as his successor he would have been accused of accumulating wealth and riches for his progeny."[1]

The Shiʿāhs maintain the divine and indefeasible right of ʿAlī for succession to the caliphate on the death of the Prophet They assert the right of ʿAlī because he happened to be the

1. *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, Vol. IV, p. 126

cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. They also claim that ʿAlī was expressly declared by the Prophet as his successor under divine guidance. Ibn Taimiyah, however, points out that the "claim of ʿAlī's succession, based on his nearness of kindred to the Prophet bears resemblance to the conventions of the pagan past when tho Arabs were unduly predisposed in favour of their own clans and kins."[1] Likewise, the unwarranted veneration of ʿAlī and other members of the Prophet's household by the Shiʿāhs, as partakers of divine nature, is looked upon by Ibn Taimiyah as impairing their dignity rather than being complimentary to them. "The excessive veneration of Husain's progeny by the Shiʿāhs", says Ibn Taimiyah, "exposes them to a bitter trial for they adulate them in a way which brings them into discredit. The contentions of the Shiʿāhs about their claims to succession of the Prophet are also entirely unsupportable. In fact, had their biographical accounts by Sunnī writers not been available, what the Shiʿahs relate about them would have been more of a condemnation than a compliment to them."[2]

Al-Hillī had profusely quoted Traditions and Quranic passages to establish the merit and excellence of ʿAlī and other *Imāms* of the Shiʿāhs or to denigrate the first three Caliphs. Ibn Taimiyah subjected each one of these quotations to a searching scrutiny in order to show that these had either been cited out of context or misinterpreted in favour or against someone according to the whims and prejudices of the author of *Minhāj-ul-Krāmah*. To give one example here, Al-Hillī had cited the following Quranic verses :

> "He hath loosed the two seas. They meet. There is a barrier between them. They encroach not (one upon the other). Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that ye deny? There cometh forth from both of them the pearl and coral-stone."[3]

1. *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, Vol. IV, p. 287
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 125
3. Q. LV : 19-22

Al-Hillī then proceeded to expound that "the two seas" alluded to ʿAlī and Fātimah, "the barrier" to the Prophet and "the pearl and coral-stone" to Hasan and Husain. Ibn Taimiyah examined the exegesis of Al-Hillī in some detail to show that the interpretation given by him betrayed agnostic tendencies of Qarmātians and Bātinites who invested the Quranic vocabulary with an enigmatic or allegorical sense. Ibn Taimiyah then gave numerous reasons to disprove the contention of Al-Hillī. He showed that the abovementioned verses were revealed at Mecca while Hasan and Husain were born at Madina. Again, these verses were elucidated further by another revelation which said: "And He it is Who hath given independence to the two seas (though they meet); one palatable, sweet, and other saltish, bitter."[1] Thus, said Ibn Taimiyah, if one were to identify ʿAlī and Fātimah with the "two seas", one would also have to accept one of them as saltish and bitter. Likewise, "the barrier", if taken to mean the Prophet, would amount to his disparagement, for the barrier is always an obstacle or an agency that keeps two things apart.[2]

Still more significant is the section in which Ibn Taimiyah replied to the charges levelled by Al-Hillī against the first three Caliphs. By applying the sound method of criticism to the imputations of Al-Hillī and supplementing it with accurate and reliable historical data, he showed how low a prejudiced mind can stoop to malign one's supposed enemies.

Shiʿaite Beliefs

Ibn Taimiyah also devoted a section of *Minhāj-us-Sunnah* to the discussion of the Shiʿaite tenets of faith whereby he demonstrated the hollowness and contradictions of their beliefs. To give an illuminating illustration, he accuses the Shiʿāhs of having committed almost the same mistake as the Christians who had endued Jesus with divine attributes as the 'Son of God',

1. Q. XXV : 53
2. *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, Vol. IV, pp. 67-68.

and then depicted him as 'a meek and helpless preacher.' "The Shiᶜāhs subscribe to contradictory doctrines", says Ibn Taimiyah. "On the one hand, they magnify ᶜAlī's prowess and courage to such an extent that he appears to be the chief defender of the Faith, on whose help even the Prophet had to depend, and who was, in that task, no less than a partaker of Divinity. But, after Islam became strong and powerful, he grew so feeble and humble that he had to take recourse, like a helpless and shaky man, to smoothing down and deying his religious beliefs in order to save himself from persecution. Then, there appears to be no other man more spineless and important than ᶜAlī, although the fact is that his conversion to Islam had increased his courage of conviction. How could a man supposed to be an ally of God in establishing Islam and subduing the non-believers fail to bring his valour to his aid especially after embracing Islam, to vanquish those who were denying justice to him? His adversaries were then fewer in number and lesser in strength than the pagans whom he had earlier subjugated."[1]

Ibn Taimiyah deprecated the lack of interest on the part of Shiᶜāhs in the study of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, the performance of prayers and other religious observances and the upkeep of mosques. He traced the reason for this irreligious behaviour to the Shiᶜaite beliefs which carry the veneration for their *Imāms* so far as to raise them to the position of a divine person. Concerning the theory of *Imāmat*, particularly the reappearance of the twelfth *Imām* who is believed to have concealed himself in some secret place till the day of his manifestation before the end of the world, Ibn Taimiyah explained the untenability as well as harmful effects of that doctrine. He demonstrated through cogent reasoning and irrefutable evidences that the Shiᶜaite theologians generally follow the Muᶜtazilites, although some of them have also been attached to the school of Greek philosophers. Some of them, like the author of *Minhāj-ul-Krāmah*, had tried to combine their knowledge of Greek philosophy

1: *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, Vol. IV, p. 56

and logical syllogism of the Muʿtazilites with their Shiʿaite beliefs and doctrines to provide a defence for their religion. However, for an erudite scholar of both the religious and secular sciences, that Ibn Taimiyah was, it was not difficult to refute the Shiʿaite arguments, point by point, and to thoroughly expose their fallacies.

VIII

Rejuvenation of Religious Thought in Islam

Ibn Taimiyah was born at a time when the prevalent sciences, both religious and discursive, and particularly those like exegesis, Traditions, jurisprudence and the corpus of law had already been developed to an extent that the educated persons normally specialised in any one subject. Sufficient literature, enough to fill in a library, had by then been accumulated on each of these sciences. There were also several scholars of outstanding intelligence and ability, who were not only deemed an authority on their subject, but were also known for their wide knowledge and strong retentive memory. That this is no mere speculation is proved by the writings of the doctors like Kamāl ud-dīn Ibn Azmalıkānī, Taqi ud-dīn ʿAlī ibn Subkī, Shams ud-dīn az-Zahabī and Abul Hajjāj al-Mizzī. There were, at that time, scholars who could have been called a living encyclopaedia for their extensive knowledge. In summing up the intellectual attainments of the age, however, a marked deficiency noted by every historian is that there was no mastermind who could not only compare with his predecessors in extensive knowledge but could also make an estimation of their views, analyse and determine their worth and bring in his own verdict in those matters. In other words, the extensiveness of knowledge possessed by the then scholars was not matched by the depth and originality of thought of the preceding ages. Thus, the scholars of the time, instead of investigating afresh the

material already existing, were content to collect, edit and interpret them in a series of commentaries and classified glossaries.

Ibn Taimiyah's Intellectual Endeavour

A fresh intellectual element was ushered by Ibn Taimiyah who, besides, digesting the existing knowledge of the time, presented *it* afresh with the fullness and critical guarantees behoving a creative thinker. With his deep knowledge of the Qur'ān and insight into the purposes and underlying objectives of the *Sharīᶜah* and the principles of jurisprudence, Ibn Taimiyah could present whatever subject he chose to scribe, with a marked authority and comprehensiveness. There is not a single composition by him whose range is not so wide that it could not be described as an encyclopaedia on the subject—bringing into its compass all the existing knowledge of the time and opening new vistas of vision. We have already discussed in some detail two of his works, namely, *Al-Jawāb-ul-Sahīh* and *Minhāj-us-Sunnah*, but there are still more outstanding monographs on other subjects, such as, *Kitāb-un-Nabūwat*, *Ar-Raddo-ᶜalal Mantaqīyīn* and *Iqtidhā'-us-Sirāt-il-Mustaqīm*, to name only a few, which combine comprehensiveness with critical thinking and provide food for thought to their readers.

Exegesis of the Qur'ān

The principal object of Ibn Taimiyah's literary endeavours was exegesis of the Qur'ān : an interest so predominant that its influence can easily be seen in his almost every work. Whenever he quotes any verse from the Qur'ān in his writings, he does not proceed further without giving its interpretation. According to his disciples his commentaries of the Qur'ān run into as many as thirty volumes. Unfortunately, none of these works survives today except in fragments consisting of the exegesis of certain Quranic chapters. Had these volumes been available today they would have undoubtedly constituted one of the most valuable collection on the subject displaying his remarkable critical

faculty and acuteness of thought. The commentaries of *Sūrat-ul-Ikhlās*, *Maʿūwztain* and *An-Nūr* along with the exegetical excerpts taken from different works by Ibn Taimiyah, published recently, exhibit his comprehensiveness, mental grit, reformative zeal and the developed sense of interpreting the Scripture in accordance with the current needs of the time. He also wrote a monograph on the principles of exegesis of the Qur'ān which is perhaps the first dissertation of its kind on this subject. That the surpassing interest of Ibn Taimiyah lay in the science of exegesis was acknowledged by his contemporaries who on his death invited the people to offer the funeral prayer of the commentator of the Qur'ān.

Traditions

Ibn Taimiyah has not left any book on Traditions or their interpretation. In fact, the remarkable advancement made in this field by the seventh and eighth centuries after *Hijrah*, had hardly left any scope for further endeavour in that direction but his writings on the principles of Tradition, bio-data of the narrators, canons for the reception and rejection of Traditions, their critical analysis and classification of juridical Traditions, scattered in his different works constitute his valuable contribution to the subject. All this material, which is quite extensive, if collected in a single volume, could serve to provide his authoritative views on the different issues of this important science.

Principles of Jurisprudence

The task of legal definition and formulation of juristic opinion was another endeavour which absorbed Ibn Taimiyah's intellectual energies. Having attained masterful proficiency in this field too, his writings on the subject contain discussions on intricate legal issues. Ibn Taimiyah's compositions on jurisprudence comprise *Iqtidhā'-us-Sirāt-il-Mustaqim* and a voluminous collection of his juristic opinions along with some smaller treatises like *Al-Qiyās* and *Minhāj-il-Wasūl ila-ʿIlm-il-Usūl.*

The work relating to the compilation of legal precepts of

the different juristic schools had almost been completed by the time of Ibn Taimiyah. Still, he reviewed several issues with the fullness of a critical mind which imparted a fresh dynamism to the legal system. In expressing his legal opinions, Ibn Taimiyah's constant endeavour was to provide guidance for the changing needs in the light of the *Shariʿah* and to bring in a closer conformity between the principles of legal systems and the Qurʾān and the *Sunnah*. The legal opinions as well as the principles governing them, enunciated by Ibn Taimiyah have been preserved in four volumes under the title of *Fatāwah Sheikh-ul-Islām Ibn Taimiyah.*[1]

Dialectics

Ibn Taimiyah's writings on dialectics and credal issues constitute more than half of his entire composition. A few of these are named after different cities (from which the specific issues were referred to him), such as *Sharah Isbahāniyah, Wāstiyah, Tadmuriyah, Risālah-i-Hamwiyah, 'Kīlāniyah, Baghdādiyah* and *Azhariyah.* Each one of these furnishes evidence of his penetrating intellect, logical thinking, comprehensive knowledge and religious fervour.

Revival of Religious Thought

Ibn Taimiyah's literary endeavours, both extensive in scope and deep in content, which combined the dogma with reason, served to clear away the cobweb spun by imitative theologians during an age of stagnation and immobility. The field of his intellectual pursuits is so large that it can be covered only by a long and intensive study. Here it would suffice to mention that his insistence on adhering to the original teachings of Islam firmly established revelation as the sole

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1. It has since been published from Egypt in 1326 A. H. Recently, the collection of his *Fatāwa* including his unpublished juristic opinions has been brought out in 30 volumes in Saudi Arabia. These volumes really constitute an encyclopaedia on Islamic jurisprudence.

criterion of any theological movement. He brought out explicitly the limitation of human reason and the futility of attaining knowledge of God through rational and philosophical methods in a way more appealing to the critical minds, than the earlier doctors. Alongwith these, his independent and critical attitude towards the earlier authorities and text-books, and the rejection of the rigidity of scholastic method generated a process of improvement by rejuvenating not only religious sciences but also by re-charging the intellectual and moral life of his time with renewed vitality. Like every fiery spirited reformer, having all the gifts of intelloctual brilliance, wisdom and courage, he sounded a new note in literature and religious thought which has ever since provided inspiration to the Muslim world. Ibn Taimiyah stands out as indisputably the greatest thinker and reformer in Islam whose influence extends to almost every reformative movement started since the eighth century, and particularly to those which gained impetus during the twelfth century of the Islamic era. His intellectual heritage still continues to appeal and stir the reformative zeal of the thoughtful element in Islam who want to re-state the truths of Islam as a self-sufficing ideology based on a revelatory eschatology and spiritual-moral view of life and the world as against the present-day materialistic thought-patterns and institutions.

Thus, the greatest contribution of Ibn Taimiyah to the Islamic thought was to re-assert the supremacy of the Scripture and the way of the Prophet, and to demonstrate how, m the changed circumstances, the whole of the religious life and thought could be reconstructed on that basis. He never compromised with any un-Islamic thought or practice which injured faith in the Oneness of God and the revelatory basis of creed and dogma, be it the popular belief of the misguided mystics and masses or the abuse of intellectual subtlety of philosophers and dialecticians or else the dogmatism of the theologians and jurists. He recognised only the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* as the two valid bases for the reconstruction of religious thought which meant, on the one hand, rooting out of all the un-Islamic

beliefs and practices and, on the other, a positive monotheistic interpretation of all ideas and institutions. In setting up the forgotten ideals and showing the way how these could guide the changing social, intellectual and moral life of the community, Ibn Taimiyah prepared the ground for a permanent revivalist movement in Islam.

SULTAN-UL-MASHAIKH

KHWAJA NIZAM UD DIN AULIYA

Sultan-ul-Mashaikh

KHWAJA NIZAM UD DIN AULIYA

I

The Chihstiyah Order in India

The sixth century of the Islamic era (the twelfth century A. D.) was a period of special significance when a new country, rich in natural and human resources, was being gradually added to the realm of Islam. The country was destined to become, in the near future, not only the centre of Islamic missionary endeavour but also of its creative, intellectual and social energies.

In the beginning of the sixth century the barbarous Tartar legions had swept over the lands of Islam and destroyed, as if by a torrent, great cities, centres of learning and education, mosques and monasteries as well as every semblance of civilized existence in the countries overrun by them. Bukhārā, Samarkand, Ray, Hamādān, Zanj, Qāzwin, Marv, Nishāpūr, Khwārism and then Baghdād, the metropolis of Islam, were reduced to ashes. The Mongol onslaught eclipsed not only the political ascendancy of Islam in all these lands lying in the West Asia but also paved the way for its social and intellectual disintegration. Only India, ruled by a strong, vigorous and zestful Turkish clan, was then able to fend off the assault of the Mongols in this region. In the Islamic world, only they possessed

the prowess as well as religious zeal which made them a match or perhaps superior to their adversaries. The Mongols made repeated assaults but were always repulsed. During the reign of Alā' ud-dīn Khiljī alone, they advanced five times against India but were beaten back : first in 696 A. H. and then on the occasion of their fourth and fifth attacks Malik Ghazi Tughlaq fought so bravely and inflicted such crushing defeats on the Mongols that, in the words of a historian, "dejected and disheartened, they gave up their attempts to conquer India as a forlorn hope."[1]

Waves after waves of refugees, many of whom were men of culture and religion, wended their way to the safety of India from Iran, Turkistān and Iraq which soon made Delhi vie with Cardova and Baghdād. Even some of the smaller towns and sub-urban centres in India rivalled, thanks to the convergence of numerous learned personages, such reputed centres of learning as Shirāz and Yeman. The historians of the time like Ziā' ud-dīn Barnī and others have listed the names of hundreds of such persons belonging to rank and nobility, learned doctors, men of letters and renowned mystics who had migrated to India owing to Mongol depredations. Soon after their arrival in India they took up posts of responsibility under the then administration or engaged themselves in teaching and preaching. It seems, as the annalists report, that India had then inherited the entire intellectual patrimony of the Islamic world.[2]

These circumstances contributed not only to the development of India's creative genius but also pointed out its future role, that it assumed not long after, as the centre of social and cultural, religious and intellectual activities in the world of Islām for many centuries to come.

The Builders of Islamic India

The discovery of India by the sons of Islam was in no way

1. *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārikh*, p. 186 and *Tarīkh Fīroz Shāhī*, pp. 251, 302 and 323
2. *Tarīkh Fīroz Shāhī*, pp. 111-113

less momentous than the discovery of America by the West. Muslim adventurers had begun to push their way to India in the first century of Islamic era. After Muhammad ibn Qāsim Thaqaffī had captured the land lying between Sind and Multan in 93 A. H., numerous cloisters and monasteries of Muslim saints and sūfīs had sprung up like heavenly lights in the gloom of surrounding polytheism and ignorance. But it was really Mahmūd of Gazni (d. 421 A. H.) who carried the Muslim arms with unvarying success to India and Shahāb ud-dīn Muhammad Ghorī (d. 602 A. H.) who firmly planted the standard of crescent in this country. Likewise, the Heaven had pre-ordained the spiritual conquest of India to the lot of the great mystic saint, Sheikh-ul-Islām Mo'īn ud-dīn Chishtī (d. 627 A. H.). Long before the Muslim conquest of India, all the four mystic orders in Islam viz. *Qādiriyah*, *Chishtiyah*, *Naqshbandiyah* and *Suharwardiyah* had already come into existence. Each of these has its share in the regeneration of Islam in India but God's will had selected the *Chishtiyah* order for providing spiritual nourishment to the nascent sapling of the faith in this country—'Thy Lord bringeth to pass what He willeth and chooseth'.[1]

Ways of God are inscrutable, indeed, but it appears that the *Chishtiyah* order, engaged in enkindling the flame of the divine love in the hearts of the people in the adjoining land of Iran, was bound by a neighbourly obligation to India. It was but easier as well as incumbent on it to win over the inhabitants of India who have ever been willing to acknowledge the message of love and devotion to the Lord. For whatever reasons the Providence had selected the *Chishtiyah* order for disseminating the religion of Peace in India, one of the Chishti Sheikhs, Khwāja Abū Muhammad Chishtī,[2] turned the direction of his

1. Q. XXVIII : 68
2. Khwāja Abū Muhammad Chishtī (d. 409 or 411 A. H.) was the son and spiritual successor of Khwāja Abū Ahmad Chishtī who was a discipie of Khwāja Abū Is'hāq Shāmī. He was succeeded by Khwāja Nasir ud-dīn

Continued on next page

efforts towards India. It is related that the campaigns of Mahmūd of Ghaznī owed their success to his blessings. Maulānā Jāmī writes in *Nufhat-ul-Uns*: "When Mahmūd had already left for Somnath,[1] Khwāja Abū Muhammad received the divine summons to join the expedition. Although he was then 70 years of age, he joined the campaign with a retinue of his followers.[2]

Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn Chishtī

Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn belonged to Sajastān[3] in Iran. Some of the older historians including Qāzī Minhāj ud-dīn 'Uthmān Jauzjānī, a contemporary of Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn Chishtī and author of the *Tabqāt-i-Nāsrī*, asserts that the Khwāja accompanied Sultan Shahāb ud-dīn of Ghor, better known to history as Muhammad Ghorī, when he gave battle to Prithvīrāj and defeated him finally at Tarāin. The annalists of the period relate that invocation of divine blessings by the Khwāja was responsible for the spectacular success achieved by Muhammad Ghorī against his foe.[4]

The writings of the later historians, however, show that Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn had arrived in India and taken up his

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Abū Yūsuf after whom the mantle of succession passed on in this wise to one after another: Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Maudūd, Hājī Sharīf Zandnī, Khwāja 'Uthmān Hārwānī and Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn Chishtī.

1. Sultan Mahmūd attacked Somnath in the year 416 A. H. while Khwāja Abū Muhammad Chishtī died in 409 or 411 A. H. If the story told by Maulānā Jāmī is correct, the incident should relate to an earlier expedition of Mahmūd and not to the attack on Somnath.
2. *Nufhat-ul-Ins*, p. 207
3. The Khwāja is commonly known as Sanjarī, which is a corruption of Sajazī denoting an inhabitant of Sajastan which, according to the old geographers, formed part of the then Khurāsān, is now divided between Iran and Afghanistan. Its capital was situated at Zaranj, near Zāhidān where its ruins can still be seen. Its limits once extended up to Ghaznī.
4. *Tabqāt-i-Nāsrī* I, p. 120, *Tārīkh Firishta*, II, p. 57 and *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*, p. 50

residence at Ajmer in the initial period of Muhammad Ghorī's Indian expeditions extending from 571 A. H. to 602 A. H. Ajmer was then the capital of the Imperial Chauhān (Chahwāna) Kings of northern India as well as a celebrated place of pilgrimage.[1]

Prithvīrāj Chauhan

Prithvīrāj (571-588 A. H.) was the son of Someshwara, the only surviving son of Anorāj and the brother of Vigrahrāj, also known as Bisāldeo. Anorāj is considered to be the founder of Chauhān Kingdom of Ajmer. Someshwara is said to have wielded an equal authority over both the Chauhān court of Ajmer and the Tomar court of Delhi. Having been married to the daughter of the last Tomar ruler of Delhi, Anandpāl, his son Prithvīrāj claimed lineage and relationship with the Tomar branch of the Rajpūts. Since Anandpāl was issueless, he had adopted Prithvīrāj as his son and successor. Thus he succeeded, in due course, to the two powerful Rajpūt kingdoms of Delhi and Ajmer. Brave and courageous, he had shown his valour in numerous campaigns against the surrounding Rajpūt kingdoms. His famous abduction of Jai Chand's daughter from Kannauj during the course of *Soimbar*, made him the hero of Prithvīrāj Rāisa, a great epic by the graphic pen of Chand Bardāi which is still popular in the northern India. However, it seems history has not forgiven him for his final defeat against Muhammad Ghorī and condemned him as an inglorious sovereign despite his valour and adventurous campaigns. In the late 586 A. H. or 587 A. H., Muhammad Ghorī was defeated by Prithīrāj at Tarāin[2] (now known as Tilondi), 14 miles from Thānesar. In late 588 A. H., Muhammad Ghorī set out with an army of one lakh twenty thousand select horsemen to avenge

1. Seven miles from Ajmer lies Pushkar, a like of great sanctity, which is equalled only by that of Mansarowar. It is believed that here Brahma performed the *Yājna* and Saraswatī reappeared in five streams. (District Gazetteer of Ajmer, 1966, p. 736).
2. The name of the place has been given as Tarāori by certain historians.

the defeat. Prithvīrāj advanced with three lakh horses and three thousand elephants to meet the enemy. The immense array of horses and foot was marshalled under the foremost princes of Hindustān. A great fight ensued, the Rajpūts fought bravely but, at last, Prithvīrāj was slain with the best and bravest of Rajpūts. This also signalled the end of independent Rajpūt Kingdoms in India.[1]

A few years before the battle of Tarāin ended the sovereignty of the Chauhāns in 588 A. H., as some chroniclers claim, an incident had sealed the fate of proud and independent Ajmer. Prithvīrāj is said to have treated unjustly a Muslim (perhaps one of his courtiers). When the Khwāja interceded on behalf of the aggrieved man, Prithvīrāj contemptuously replied : "Since the time this man has come here, he is indulging in tall talk never expereinced or heard before by anybody." The Khwāja, on hearing the reply of Prithvīrāj, calmly said: "We have handed over Pithorarāj, alive and in chains, to Muhammad Ghorī." It was not long after this incident that the proud Chauhān was attacked and defeated by Muhammad Ghorī.[2]

The Saint and Preacher

Whatever may have been the sequence of events narrated by the historians, there is hardly any doubt that Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn had selected Ajmer as the centre for propagating Islam and radiating the message of love and spirituality, sometimes in between the campaigns of Muhammad Ghorī but before the latter had established his stronghold in that political and religious centre of medieval India. The Khwāja's decision bespeaks of his courage, determination and unflinching trust in God which are the hall-marks of great conquerors and founders of religions. His determined efforts coupled with his sincerity, reliance on God and ennobling sacrifice for his cause turned the country, steeped in the darkness of idolatry for thousands of

1. *Tārikh-i-Nasri*, I, p. 468 ; *Tārikh-i-Firishta*, I, p. 176
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, 147 and *Maāthar-il-Kirām*.

years, into a land of religious scholars and saints and made it a repository of religious knowledge and spiritual attainments. It was because of him that every part of this great country began to resound soon with the calls of *Allāh-o-Akbar* and was filled with the love-songs of the Qur'ān and *Hadīth* to the envy of the entire world of Islam. Verily, the world was moved by an illuminated soul.

The author of *Siar-ul-Auliā'* has correctly summed up the contribution of Khwāja Moin ud-dīn in these words: "Hindustan, to the end of its farthest southern limits, was a land of pagans and polytheists. Whosoever held power made the claim: 'I am the Lord, Most High.' The inhabitants of the land made almost every object and being a partaker of divinity. Stocks and stones, trees and beasts, cow and cow-dung were the things before which they prostrated. Darkened by the gloom of infidelity their hearts had been securely sealed. All were strangers to the faith in God and His ordinances, the Lord of the worlds and His apostles; neither anybody knew the true direction of God's religion nor had anyone heard the call that 'God is Great.' The moment Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn set his foot on this land, the dreariness of paganism gave way to the brightness of Islam. Thanks to his efforts and blessings, the relics of fetishism were replaced by the pulpit, the niche and the arch, and the lands ringing with the sound of idolatrous cults were filled with the cries of *Allāh-o-Akbar*. Whosoever would be blessed with true faith in God in this country and whosoever shall partake this wealth till the Day of Reckoning and their progeny as well as all those who will extend the bounds of true faith in this land shall go on increasing the merits and rewards of Sheikh-ul-Islam Mo'īn ud-dīn Hasan Sajazī."[1]

Another chronicler, Ghulām 'Alī Azād writes in Maāthar-il-Kirām: "There is not the least doubt that the spiritual mentors of *Chishtiyah* order have a rightful claim on India."[2] The

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 47
2. *Maāthar-il-Kirām*, p. 17

author of *Siar-ul-Aqtāb* says: "The blessed footsteps of Mo'īn ud-dīn dispelled the gloom of infidelity in the land and led to propagation of Islam."[1]

During the life time of Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn Chishtī the political capital of the land was transferred from Ajmer to Delhi. Ajmer, consequently, lost much of its prominence but the Khwāja remained at Ajmer and sent his disciple and spiritual successor, Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, to deputise for him at the capital. He gave himself up, during the remainder of his life, to prayer and meditation, teaching his disciples to govern their conduct according to the principles of the *Sha'rīah* and preaching the message of Islam to others. None of the numerous memoirs and biographies mention the details of his missionary activities except that his efforts were crowned with success and a vast multitude entered the fold of Islam on acconnt of him. In the words of Abul Fadhal "he took up his residence at Ajmer where he spread the light of faith and, because of his sublime life and preachings, legions after legions of people embraced Islam.[2]

Such was, then, the mission of the Khwāja to which he devoted himself for fifty years till his death at the age of ninety years in 627 A. H.[3] Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī had by then established himself firmly at Delhi where he was engaged, like his mentor, in revivifying and illuminating the hearts of a vast multitude of people. The then Sultan of Delhi, Shams ud-dīn Iltutmish, was also a devotee of the Khwāja whose moderating influence led the Sultan to dispense justice with an even hand and strengthen the roots of Islam in India.

Khwāja Bakhtiyār Kākī

Born in the town of Aush,[4] Khwāja Bakhtiyār Kākī became

1. *Siar-ul-Aqtāb*, p. 101
2. *Āin-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 270
3. The year in which the Khwāja died is disputed by his biographers who have mentioned 627, 632 and 633 A. H. The authors of *Siar-ul-Aqtāb* and *Kazinatul Asfiā* are agreed that the Khwāja died in 633 A. H.
4. A town near Farghana in the Trans-oxiana region.

an orphan at the tender age of one and a half years. His mother took special care for his education and got him admitted in a primary school at the age of five, where he received education from Maulānā Abū Hafs Aushī. After completing his education at Aush Qutb ud-dīn took the road to Baghdad where his fate brought him in contact with that pure-hearted soul who helped him to attain the highest form of spiritual existence and then radiate those luminous qualities in Hindustan. He was endowed the robe of spiritual succession of the *Chishtiyah* order by Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn in the sacred mosque of Faqīh 'Abul Laith Samarkandī, in the presence of a large number of religious doctors and celebrated saints. He directed his course to India at the bidding of his mentor and stayed over at Delhi, capital of the nascent Islamic State in that country. The royal court at Delhi was, at the time, filled with poets, artists and scholars from many lands attracted by the Sultan's generosity, and had also men of arts and learning drawn from the realms over-run by Chenghiz Khan and his successors. This new metropolis of India had thus rapidly gathered the cream of talent from the entire world of Islam.

Khwāja Qutb ud-din was held in veneration by Sultan Iltutmish but he persistently refused to have anything to do with the royal court and rejected all offers of a fief or a grant from the King. First in Kilokhri, and then near the mosque of Malik 'Izz ud-din, he continued to live like a mendicant although Sultan Iltutmish continued to pay occasional visits to him.[1] He became so popular among the masses that once when Khwāja Mo'īn ud-din came to Delhi to see his disciple, the then Sheikh-ul-Islam Najm ud-dīn Sughrā made a complaint to the Khwāja. Thereupon the Khwāja said to his disciple, "Bābā Bakhtiyār, so soon have you gained eminence that the servants of God have begun complaining against you? Leave this place and come to Ajmer, there I will be at your service."[2] The

1. *Tārīkh Firishta*, Vol. II, p. 720
2. *Siar-ul-Āuliā'*, p. 54

Sheikh had said what could be expected of a man who had attained the summit of spiritual perfection. He did not like his disciple to be the cause of anxious concern to anyone, and not the least to the Sheikh-ul-Islam of the Islamic State. He had also hinted that if the people at Delhi were not aware of the stature and spirituality of Khwāja Bakhtiyār Kākī, he knew it very well and could accord him the highest marks of respect. Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn gave the reply expected of him, "My Lord, what of sitting in your presence, I hardly deserve to stand before you."[1]

The mentor asked the disciple to accompany him to Ajmer, and the disciple nodded his assent without a demur. But no sooner had the two come out of the city, it dawned upon the Sheikh that the popularity of his disciple was by the will of God. "Khwāja Qutb Ud-dīn started on his journey to Ajmer in the company of his Sheikh", records an annalist, "but the news of his departure raised a clamour in the city. The whole of its population along with Sultan Iltutmish came out of the capital to follow his steps wailing and lamenting over his departure."[2]

Khwāja Moʿīn ud-dīn did not consider it prudent to plunge into sorrow such a vast multitude for the sake of one man. He allowed Khwāja Quṭb ud-dīn to return to Delhi and remarked: Bābā Bakhtiyār, you better remain here. That such a large number of people are sorrow-stricken at your departure, I do not consider it proper to rend their hearts. Go back, I leave this city in your charge."[3]

Sultan Iltutmish thanked the Sheikh for allowing Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn to remain at Delhi.

Back in Delhi Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn again took up his austere living and the task of diffusing the spirit of humanity

1. *Siar ul-Auliā*, p. 54
2. *Ibid.*, p. 54
3. *Ibid.*, p. 55. What the Khwāja meant was that he should carry on the mission entrusted to him and continue to invite people of the Capital to the path of righteousness.

among his followers and devotees. He never had anything to do with the royal court. As an earnest seeker of truth he had renounced all wordly wealth and earthly desires ; but the people still flocked to him as if "the whole world, all the notables of rank and authority deemed it an honour to pay respect to him."[1]

Sultan Shams-ud-dīn Iltutmish used to call upon him twice a week.[2] Delhi was then not only the capital of the Sultanate, but was also the emerging stronghold of Islam in a country recently brought under its realm, where many a sagacious mind of the then Islamic world had gathered. It was no easy task to provide spiritual guidance to all and also to exert a moderating influence over an otherwise autocratic form of government. Although Khwāja Bakhtiyār Kākī did not live long enough to complete the difficut task entrusted to his care ; for he remained alive only four or five years after the death of his spiritual guide, he discharged his responsibility with supreme success and also established the *Chishtiyah* order in India on a firm footing for all times to come.

He was about fifty years of age when the all-consuming flame of the love of God, which he had kept subdued in his frail bodily frame for the edification of surrounding humanity, burst forth in ecstatic trances and transports. He was often seen in the state of total absorption and elevation produced by Divine illumination of his heart, till the day came when he heard in the chamber of Sheikh ʿAlī Sikizzi[3] a singer reciting the following couplet.

Ungrudging who are in resignation and submission ;
A new life they get, ever and anon.

He fell into ecstatic trance ; returned to his place after some time, but remained attracted to the same condition. He desired the same couplet to be repeated again and again until

1. *Akhbār-ul-Akhyār*, p. 46
2. *Tārīkh-i-Firishta*, Vol. II, p. 719
3. Also known as Sheikh Ali Sajazi, according to some historians.

four days passed in the same condition. In between, when the time for prayer arrived, he would perform the observance, but would again relapse into the same state of ecstasy and rapturous trance as soon as the couplet was recited before him. On the fifth night, in the same condition, he preferred the deeper privacy of the grave.[1] This incident is reported to have happened in the year 633 A.H.[2]

While returning from *ʿIdgāh* to his residence, a few days before his death, the Khwāja happened to pass through an open ground. He remained standing at the place for quite some time until a companion accompanying him politely reminded : "It is *ʿId* today and a large number of people would be awaiting your return." He replied : "I find the odour of hearts emitting here." Later he called for the owner of the land and purchased the field for his burial place. This is the place where his grave exists today.[3]

Khwāja Qutub ud-dīn had conferred the habit of succession to nine or ten of his disciples, but his chief successor who devoted himself whole-heartedly to the completion of the task undertaken by him was Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn Ganjshakar.

Khwāja Farīd-ud-dīn Ganjshakar

Khwāja Moʿīn ud-dīn Chishtī was indisputably the founder of *Chishtiyah* order in India, but it was promoted by Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn whose two disciples, Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Dehlavi and Sheikh ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn ʿAlī Sābir of Kalyar spread it far and wide in the country.

The first name of the Khwāja was Masʿūd, the surname Farīd ud-dīn, but he is commonly known by the appellation of Ganjshakar.[4]

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1. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, on the authority Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliāʾ.
2. Certain memoirs give the year as 634 A. H.
3. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, (p. 55), on the authority of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliāʾ The place is now called Qutub Sāhib
4. *Lit.* Treasure-house of Sugar. It is difficult to say, with any amount of certainty, how Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn came to be known as Ganjshakar, for, differen steries about it have been told by the writers.

His grandfather, Qāzi Shuʿaib, a lineal descendant of the second Caliph, had migrated from Kabul to Lahore because of the Tartar depredations. He stayed for a while in Kasūr and then settled in Kahenwāl where he was granted an estate and appointed as Qāzī. Farīd ud-dīn was born here in 569 A.H. When still young, he travelled to Multan, then a great educational centre of the country, for higher education. In Multan he studied under different teachers among whom was also Maulānā Minhāj ud-dīn who taught him *An-Nāfeh*, the renowned book on juristic science. It was here in Multan that Farīd ud-dīn met Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī in 548 A.H. and immediately took an oath of allegiance to him. He also decided to accompany his Sheikh by terminating his education but the latter persuaded him to complete his studies first, which he did in India and abroad.[1]

After completion of his education, Farīd ud-dīn came back to Delhi where his Sheikh selected a place near Gaznī Gate for his stay. Here he busied himself with prayer and meditation. After he was gifted with spiritual enlightenment and illumination, he was permitted by Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn to stay at Hānsī, with one of his disciples Sheikh Jamāl ud-dīn Khatīb. When Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn died, Farīd ud-dīn was already at Hānsī. He reached Delhi on the third day of his Sheikh's death and was invested with the robe of his master's vicegerency by Qazī Hamīd ud-dīn Nāgaurī, as desired by the departing mentor. This was an indication that Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn should take the place of Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn.

It was the third day of Farīd ud-dīn's succession when an old acquaintance and follower, Sarhangā by name, came to see him. He was, however, not allowed to present himself before the Sheikh by his attendants. The man stayed there for a few days and when Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn happened to come out of his residence, he fell on his knees and complained that in Hānsī it

1. *Rāhat-ul-Qulūb*, a collection of his utterances, contains the details of his journeys, but the book being of spurious nature cannot be relied upon.

was not difficult for him to pay his respect to the Sheikh, but in Delhi, the poor like him could not gain an access to his presence. Farīd ud-dīn took the complaint to his heart as a divine warning for the pomp and glory with which he had been surrounded. He also did not like the absence of peace and solitude at Delhi which he regarded as an impediment in the way of his journey to higher stages of spirituality. He, therefore, atonce decided to return to Hānsī. When it was pointed out to him that his spiritual guide and mentor had desired him to take his place; he replied: "My mentor had no doubt bequeathed his trust to me but whether I live in a city or wilderness, it shall ever remain with me."[1]

Khwāja Farīd had selected Hānsī so that he might live there as a recluse, unknown and undisturbed. But Maulānā Nūr Turk, another disciple of Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn, told the people about his spiritual status and they began to crowd round him here too. Khwāja Farīd left for his home town Kahenwāl, a town near Multan, but his fame having travelled faster than him he had to move on to Ajodhan.[2] Khwāja Farīd's eminence did not, however, remain hidden for long even in Ajodhan where the stream of visitors was often so long that he had to receive them till it was quite late in the night.

In the beginning he had not enough to live upon. A local wild fruit *Piloo* was brought to be boiled and salted which served as the meal for Khwāja Farīd and his followers. But even during those days of extreme poverty, he was not the least less careful about the lawfulness of the food taken by him. Once, while he took a morsel in his hand to break his fast, he remarked: "There appears to be something wrong with it." The servant replied : "We had no salt. I borrowed a small quantity."[3]

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1. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, p. p. 72
2. Now the place is called Pakpattan. It is situated in district Montgomery of Pakistan.
3. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, p. 66

Khwāja Farīd replied : "This is against my principle. Now it is not lawful for me to take this food." It was not long before that his initial indigence gave place to affluence. Then the servants had to keep the dishes ready all day for the incoming guests, from early morning till late in the night. Whoever wished could come and take food from his imperial kitchen.[1]

He was equally cordial to all, great and small. In the words of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn : "In what a magnanimous and wonderful way he lived—that it was difficult to emulate. Whether one was an old friend or follower, living with him for years, or a stranger coming for the first time to see him, he would attend to all with equal kindliness of heart."[2] Maulānā Badr ud-dīn says : "I was his chief attendant. Normally he gave all instructions to me. With no veil of secrecy, he was the same in company or solitude. I never noticed anything contrary to it during several years of my companionship with him."[3]

Sultan Nāsir ud-dīn Mahmūd once came to see Khwāja Farīd at the head of a large army which was on its way to Uchh and Multan. The description of the vast multitude desiring to pay homage to the Sheikh on this occasion has been thus given by Khwājà Nizām ud-dīn : "The thronging crowd was beyond control. The attendants hung the sleeves of his shirt from a balcony to be kissed by the people. Very soon it was torn to shreds. At last the Sheikh came out to the mosque and asked his attendants to form a cordon round him so that people might pay their respect without mobbing him. People came, saluted him from a distance and went away. Suddenly, an old sweeper broke into the cordon and fell on the feet of the Khwāja saying, "Sheikh Farīd, are you fed up? You ought to offer thanks for this blessing of God." The Sheikh cried and expressed regret. Later he bade him farewell with presents."[4]

1. *Siar-ul-Aulīā*, p 64
2. *Ibid*. p. 68
3. *Ibid* , p. 65
4. *Ibid*., p. 79

On another occasion the Prime Minister Ghiyāth ud-dīn Balban called upon the Sheikh on behalf of Sultan Nāsir ud-dīn and presented some cash and a royal charter granting four villages to the Sheikh. The Sheikh returned the charter and distributed the cash among the mendicants.[1]

Ghiyāth ud-dīn Balban succeeded Sultan Nāsir ud-dīn. He was also devoted to Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn since he considered his accession to the throne as a reward of Khwāja's blessings and invocation for him. Still, the Khwāja always remained unconcerned and unsolicitous. A recommendatory letter which the Khwāja once wrote to Sultan Ghiyāth ud-dīn Balban for a certain person bears out how little he cared for the King. He wrote: "I present the affairs of this man first before God and then before you. If you come to his aid, the benefactor would really be God to whom you should be grateful: but if you do not; then you would desist by the will of God and no responsibility shall lie on you."[2]

Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn had the most cordial relations with other mystics of his time. Sheikh-ul-Islam Bahā᾽ ud-dīn Zakaryā of Multān was an eminent spiritual guide and a Sheikh of *Suharwardiyah* order and also his contemporary.[3] The Khwāja had great regard and affection for him and always addressed him as *Sheikh-ul-Islam*.

The ruling passion of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn's life was his ardent love and devotion to God which reflected his worthiness. His heart's immortal thirst for Divine propinquity inspired, guided and trained such other eminent mystics as ʿAlā᾽ ud-dīn ʿAlī Sābir and Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn. The latter relates that once he saw Khwāja Farīd moving about with breathless impatience in his room and reciting some verses which meant:

"My only wish is to live smitten with Thy love;
Live if I must, beneath Thy feet, and crumble unto dust.

1. *Siār-ul-Autiā᾽*, pp. 79-80
2. *Akhbār-ul-Akhyār*. The letter had been written in Arabic.
3. Sheikh-ul-Islam Bahā᾽ ud-dīn Zakaryā was born in 566 A. H. and Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn was three years younger to him.

Thee alone I desire in this world and the next,
Would that I live for Thee and die for Thee."

He recited the verses and then fell into prostration; after a while he would get up, move about in the room restlessly and again recite the same verses.[1]

The Khwāja possessed a tender heart which was easily touched by a devotional verse or ancedotes of the saints. Often he broke down into tears; always kept fast; recited the Qur'ān regularly; and instructed his disciples to follow his example in fasting and recitation of the Book of God.[2] He was also fond of musical recitations. Once someone remarked that the theologians disputed the validity of musical recitations. He replied: "Holiness be to God! One has been burnt and reduced to ashes but the other is still disputing its legitimacy."[3]

He spent his life as a solitary anchorite. Indifferent to the grandees and ruling chiefs, he had dedicated himself to the service of God like the earlier mystics of his path.

Sheikh Badr ud-dīn Gaznavī was a contemporary of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn and a disciple of his Sheikh, Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī. He was on friendly terms with a certain grandee of the time who had built a monastery for him. It so happened that the particular patrician incurred the wrath of the king and with him Sheikh Badr ud-dīn had also to suffer certain hardships. He requested Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn to pray for him. The Khwāja wrote back to him. "Whoever shall tread the path you had chosen, he will surely invite trouble for him. You are a follower of the pure-hearted saints, then why did you get a monastery constructed for you against their traditions. This was not the way of Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn and Khwāja Mo'īn ud-dīn, nor had they ever paraded their wares in a monastery: they wanted to live unnoticed, unknown."[4]

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 123
2. *Halāt-i-Sultan-ul-Mashā'ikh*, p 12
3. *Siar-ul-Aulia'*, p. 12
4. *Siar-ul-Arīfīn*, p 85

Because of his indifference towards the rich and the noble the Khwāja had to suffer privations, despite his increasing popularity, towards the end of his life. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn says in *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, "By the time he came to his journey's end, he was again in reduced circumstances. I was with him during the month of Ramadhān, when the food we had was insufficient for us. None of us took a hearty meal in those days. Everything in the household was of inferior stuff. When I took leave from the Sheikh to depart from there, he gave me a *sultānī*[1] for travelling expenses. Later on, he sent me a word through Maulānā Badr ud-dīn Is'hāq to postpone my departure for a day more. When the time arrived for fast-breaking, no edibles were available in his house. I went to the Sheikh and requested him to allow me to purchase some foodstuff from the money he had granted me earlier. The Sheikh gave me the permission and also invoked blessings of God for me."[2]

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn goes on to describe the death of his Sheikh in these words: "On the fifth of Muharram his illness took a serious turn. He fell unconscious after performing the *'isha'* prayers. After a while when he regained consciousness he asked whether he had recited the prayers. Those present at the time replied in affirmative but he said: 'Let me repeat it again. Who knows what is going to happen.' Having performed the prayers he again fell in a swoon. Again on coming back to his senses, he repeated his earlier question but again said: 'Let me say the prayers again, for nobody knows what is to happen.'[3] He recited the *'ishā'* prayers for the third time and then he shuffled off his mortal coil."[4]

Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn died on Tuesday, the fifth Muharram 664 A. H.[5] and was buried at Ajodhan. Sultan Muhammad

1. Probably the rupee of those days.
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 66
3. *Ibid.*, p. 89
4. *Ibid.*, p. 89
5. The year of his death, commonly held as 644 A. H., does not appear to

[*Footnote continued on next page*]

Tughlaq later constructed a mausoleum over his grave.

The Khwāja was survived by five sons, Sheikh Nasr ud-dīn Nasr ullah, Sheikh Shahāb ud-dīn, Sheikh Badr ud-dīn Sulaimān, Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn and Sheikh Yaqoob and three daughters, Bībī Nastūrah, Bībī Fatimah and Bībī Sharīfah.

Among the spiritual successors of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn, his third son Sheikh Badr ud-dīn and grandson Sheikh ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn were noted for their piety and saintliness. Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq was also a devoted disciple of Sheikh ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn. His descendants too included a number of pure-hearted souls who devoted their lives to preaching and inviting people through their precepts and example towards spiritual and moral purification.

be correct. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn has mentioned several incidents pertaining to Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn, which happened in the year 669 A. H. It seems that he died in 670 A. H. as mentioned in *Khazīnatul Asfia* on the authority of *Mukhbirul Wāsilīn* and *Tazkaratul ʿAashqīn.*

II

Life Sketch of Khwaja Nizam ud-din Aulia'

Popularly known by his surname Nizām ud-dīn, he was named by his father Ahmad Ibn ʿAlī as Muhammad. Descending from a family of Saiyids which had migrated from Arabia to Central Asia, his grandfather Khwāja ʿAlī and maternal grandfather Khwāja ʿArab, who were also cousins, had come down to Lahore and thence to Budaun[1] where several other families of Iran and Khurasān noted either for their noble descent or godliness had settled down.

Early Education

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn was born at Budaun in 636 A. H.[2]

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1. Budaun is situated in Rohilkhand Division of Uttar Pradesh near the eastern bank of Sot River. In those days it was a populous town which became important as the northern frontier post of the then Muslim kingdom of Delhi (*Nazhatul Khwātir*).

   Captured by Qutub ud-dīn Aibeck in 1196, it remained a major provincial governorship under Shams ud-dīn Iltutmish. The ruined fort at Budaun is a witness of the importance it once had under the early Muslim kingdom. The imposing Jāmʿī Masjid was built here in 1223, under the patronage of Iltutmish, after whom his son Rukn ud-dīn Firoz Shāh also remained governor of Budaun before his accession to the throne.

2. The year has been calculated by the author of *Siar-ul-Auliā'* by deducting his age from the year when he died.

When he was only five years of age his father died. His mother who was known for her fervant piety, took pains for his proper education and moral guidance despite her appalling poverty. He received his education under Maulānā ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn Usūlī.[1] After Maulānā ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn Usūlī had taught him some elementary books on jurisprudence and a text-book named *Qudoorī*, he asked his disciple to bring a turban. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn's mother somehow managed to purchase cotton and got it spun and woven into muslin for him.[2] She also invited some of the notable theologians and mystics of the time on the occasion. Khwāja ʿAlī, a disciple of Sheikh Jalāl ud-dīn Tebrezī placed the first coil of the turban round his head and all those present at the ceremony prayed for his spiritual development.

Uttermost Poverty

As an orphan who did not have enough to live upon, he had not un-often to forgo his meals. He related later on that whenever he had nothing to eat, his mother used to tell him that they were God's guests that day—a remark which was very pleasing to him. Once somebody sent some corn to his mother which sufficed for their meals for quite a few days. He states that he soon became so sick of it that he longed for the day when his mother would again announce that they were the guests of God. At last the day came when the gifted corn was finished and he was told by his mother that they had to rely on the hospitality of God. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn says that the blissful satisfaction he derived that day from the intimation from his mother was beyond description.[3]

Impulsive Attraction Towards the Sheikh

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn says: "When I was only twelve

1. Maulana ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn Usūlī was a disciple of Sheikh Jalāl ud-dīn Tebrezī. Like his Sheikh he led a frugal life and took care to hide his spiritual attainments.
2. *Sirāj-ul-Majālis* (Urdu Translation *Khair-ul-Majālis*), p. 222.
3. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, p. 113

years of age, still studying lexicology under Abū Bakr Kharrāta (also known as Abū Bakr Qawwāl), a man who had been to Multan came to see my teacher. He began to narrate the virtues and excellence of Sheikh Bahā᾿ ud-dīn Zakariya Multānī, the atmosphere of sanctity and godliness prevailing in his monastery and the enthusiasm and eagerness of the people around him for prayers and vigils which had made even the maidservants to pass their time in recollection of God. He went on with his narration praising the Sheikh but nothing of the description given by him awakened any response in my heart. Thereafter he told that from Multān he also went to Ajodhan where he met Sheikh-ul-Islam Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn, who could really be called a king of the saints. At once I felt a strong and absorbing attraction towards Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn.[1]

Studies at Delhi

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn first came to Delhi at the age of sixteen years.[2] He spent three or four years in further studies at Delhi where were then some of the erudite scholars of the time. Sultān Nāsir ud-dīn Maḥmūd then presided over the kingdom with Ghiyāth ud-dīn Balban as his Chief Minister. Maulāna Shams ud-dīn Khwārzamī, also known as Khwāja Shams ul-Mulk, held the office of *Mustaufi-ul-Mamālik*[3] but he was also a savant among the scholars of the time. He had taken upon himself, as was the custom in those days, the additional responsibility of teaching the students along with his onerous official duties. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn was fortunate to get himself enlisted as one of his students. He soon became a favourite of his teacher who graciously permitted him, alongwith

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā᾿* p. 100 and *Fawā᾿id-ul-Fuwād* p. 149
2. The age given in *Siar-ul-Auliā᾿* appears to be correct for the Khwāja spent three or four years at Delhi and then went to Ajodhan to become a disciple of Khwāja Farid ud-dīn. Then he was 20 years of age.
3. The Chief Auditor or the Accountant General of the kingdom.

two of his fellow students Qutb ud-dīn Nāqla and Burhān ud-dīn Bāqi, to take their lessons in his private apartment.

Whenever any student absented himself or was late, Khwāja Shams ul-Mulk used to remonstrate them simply by saying: "What was my fault that you did not come," or he jokingly remarked: "Let me know my mistake so that I may not commit it again." But Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn says that Shams ul-Mulk never complained whether he was late or absent. He always insisted on Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn to come and sit with him in his own chamber.[1]

A Brilliant Student

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn was a studious and brilliant student. He occupied a distinguished place among his class-mates as an eloquent orator and a skilled debater. His proficiency in reasoning the points cogently earned him the title of '*Mahfil Shikan*' or the breaker of debates.[2]

Maqāmāt Harīrī—a book of stylistic elegance composed in rhymed prose—was included in the curriculum in those days. Normally the students used to study it like other books of literature and learnt to explain its difficult passages. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn, however, learnt forty of its chapters by heart. Later on, when he realised the futility of his effort, he committed to his memory *Mashāriq-ul-Anwār*, a famous compilation of Traditions to make amends for his mistake.

He studied *Hadith* from Sheikh Kamāl ud-dīn Zāhid (d. 684 A.H.),[3] a noted Traditionist of his time and a disciple of Allāma Hasan ibn Muhammad as-Saghānī, (d. 650 A.H.)[4] the author of *Mashāriq-ul-Anwār*. In *Fiqah* or Jurisprudence, he was fortunate enough to study under Allāma Burhān ud-dīn

1. *Fawāi'd-ul-Fuwād*, p. 68
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 101
3. *Ibid.*, p. 101
4. Besides *Mashāriq-ul-Anwār*, a famous text-book on Traditions, he also wrote *Al-Ubāb-uz-Zākhir*, one of the most reliable and authoritative works on lexicography.

al-Marginiānī who had written the *Hidāyah* of world fame. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn also studied *Mashāriq ul-Anwār* from the latter who granted him a certificate for teaching it to other.[1]

Mental Disquietude

Like an assiduous student Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn paid full attention to his studies. He wanted to achieve distinction as a man of letters, but he also felt a choking disquiet in his heart: it was not the product of any apathy or lethargy but an anxiety born out of his solicitous nature desiring something else which could make him calm and composed. The pedantry of the bookish knowledge he was acquiring as also the verbal wranglings over theoretical issues filled him with disgust. Once he remarked: "As a young man I used to associate with my companions but I always felt an aversion, a desire to avoid them all and longed to forsake their company. Although my friends were students and academicians engaged in literary pursuits but often I felt agitated and told my friends that I would not remain with them for long and abandon them." In reply to a question by Amīr Hasan ʿAlāʾ Sajazī he said that he had these feelings before he met Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn.

The mother of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn died when he was still in Delhi.[2] Once he mentioned about the death of his mother and wept so bitterly that it became difficult to follow what he said. Lamentingly he recited the verse:

Alas! no device could avail me then,
Nor could I chain the night of tryst.

The Khwāja says: "Once after sighting the new moon, I went to salute and pay my respects to my mother. She replied, 'Whom would you pay homage next month?' I at once knew

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1. The certificate which has been quoted in *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ* is dated 22nd Rabʿī-ul-Awwal, 679 A. H. This, in other words means that Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn was 43 years of age at that time. It also shows his eagerness to continue his further education till an advanced age,
2. *Fawāʾīd-ul-Fuwād*, p. 47

that her death was drawing near. Dejected, I began to weep and I asked, 'Mother, to whose care do you entrust me'. 'To-morrow shall I answer your question', she replied and bade me to spend the night with Sheikh Najīb ud-dīn. I went away but before dawn next day a maid-servant came running to announce that the mother wanted me at once. I enquired if she was all right. She replied in the affirmative and I hastened to my mother's side. She said, 'Yesterday you had asked me something. Now listen to me carefully.' Then she asked for my right hand and holding it in her hands said : "O God my Lord, I entrust him to Thy care.' After that she closed her eyes and bade farewell to this fleeting world. I thanked God for the reply given by my mother for I would not have been so well-pleased if she had left the house filled with rubies and gold than the reply she had given to my qnestion."[1]

An Unfulfilled Wish

At a time when the stories of the gifts and honours bestowed by the royal court on accomplished scholars, doctors and jurists were in everyone's mouth, it was not strange that the young Khwāja aspired, with his learning and straitened circumstances, for a lucrative post of rank and authority. It was but natural for a man who had tasted the pangs of hunger, despite his spiritual yearnings, to look forward to material comforts, honour and riches. He asked one day Sheikh Najīb ud-dīn Mutwakkil to pray God that he should become a Qāzi. Sheikh Najīb ud-dīn, however, kept quiet at his request. He repeated his request again for he thought the Sheikh had not listened to to him. Thereupon the Sheikh replied, "Don't be a Qāzi. Become something else."[2]

First visit to Ajodhan

Sheikh Najīb ud-dīn Matwakkil was the brother of Khwāja

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, p. 151
2. *Fawāʾid-ul-Fuwād*, p. 28

Farīd ud-dīn. Nizām ud-dīn had already developed a feeling of great reverence for Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn while still a boy at Budaun. His introduction to Sheikh Najīb ud-dīn, with whom he spent some of his time, inflamed his fascination for Khwāja Farīd. He made up his mind to repair to Ajodhan.

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn has himself given an account of his first meeting with his spiritual mentor. He says that no sooner than was he ushered in the presence of Khwāja Farid, he recited a Persian couplet which said:

"Thy separation set my heart in flames blazing,
And the soul was ravaged by the flood of thy longing."

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn wanted to express his keen desire to meet the Sheikh but he found his tongue chained to his pallet by the awe of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn. Finding him overwhelmed with emotion, Khwāja Farīd remarked: "Every newcomer is overtaken by awe."[1]

Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn showed special favour to Nizām ud-dīn and ordered a cot to be provided for him in the guest house. Nizām ud-dīn, however, hesitated to sleep on a cot at a place where numerous respectable persons, learned scholars and divines who had committed the Qur'ān to their bosom had spread their beddings on the ground. When this was conveyed to Maulānā Badr ud-dīn, who was charged with the care of the guests, he sent him the word: "Have you to follow your own whims or abide by the instructions of the Sheikh?" Nizām ud-dīn replied, "I shall do whatever the Sheikh desires." He then instructed him to sleep on the cot.[2]

Nizām ud-dīn took the oath of fealty to Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn. He was then 20 years of age.[3]

Further Education

It seems that Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn had still certain text-

1. *Fawāi'd-ul-Fuwād*, p. 31
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 107
3. *Ibid.*, p. 107

books to study when he went to Ajodhan. The path he had chosen for himself required that he should now strive to attain that perfect knowledge of God which was the great purpose of his journey or, indeed, the very object of one's existence. The formal education he had so far was nothing more than a disconcerting experience for a sensitive and awakened soul. If he had devoted himself so long to his studies as a necessity and preliminary step to lead his wandering soul onwards, it now seemed doubly difficult for him to continue the pursuit of formal education when he had reached the fount of knowledge. He had, however, chosen a Sheikh who was himself an accomplished scholar with a heart illuminated by the certitude of Divine knowledge. He considered it necessary that every traveller seeking the path of mysticism should acquire a certain degree of formal education, for he had himself been instructed by his spiritual mentor in that wise. There was another reason too. The Sheikh had a prognostication of Nizām ud-dīn's outstanding gifts of a seer and teacher which he had to utilise later on for the guidance of the people.

Therefore, when Nizām ud-dīn sought the permission of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn to terminate his studies in order to devote himself exclusively to devotional exercises, he replied, "I do not like anybody to terminate his studies. Do both, continue your studies as well as the recitations and prayers and see which engages your attention more." He also said, "The mendicant has to have some knowledge *too*."[1]

As a mark of special favour to Nizām ud-dīn, Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn himself started teaching him. "Nizām, you would have to study certain books under me," said he. Six chapters of Sheikh Shahāb ud-dīn Suharwardī's *ʿAwārif-ul-Maʿārif*, and the *Tamhīd* of Abū Shakūr Sālmī were taught by him to Nizām ud-dīn. He also instructed his disciple about the rules of recitation of the Qur'ān and guided him in the recital of the first six parts of the holy Scripture.[2]

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 107
2. *Ibid.*, p. 106

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn could never forget the charming way in which Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn had taught him. He often used to say that the deep and hidden meanings of the mystic truths explained to him by Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn could never be explained by anybody else. "I often wished", said Nizām ud-dīn later on, "that it would be better if I die listening to his discourses."[1]

A Lesson in Self-effacement

The copy of *ʿAwārif-ul-Maʿārif* from which Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn taught Nizām ud-dīn was old and crumbly and written in a crabbed hand. While Khwāja Farīd had once to pause for a few seconds to make out the writing, Nizām ud-dīn innocently remarked: "I have seen another copy with Sheikh Najīb ud-dīn Mutawakkil. It was a correct one." "I don't have the energy to correct this one", was the reply of the Khwāja which he repeated many a time. Nizām ud-dīn says that at first he did not understand what his teacher meant but when Maulānā Badr ud-dīn Is'hāq told him that the Khwāja was expressing displeasure at his remark, he was confounded. Taking off his cap, he fell on the feet of his mentor and implored his forgiveness. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn says that he repeatedly requested the Sheikh to pardon him but his annoyance did not abate. At last he got up, and knowing not what to do, he spent two days sorrow-stricken and disheartened. He even thought of committing suicide by jumping into a well but good sense prevailed on him. At his wit's end, he sped away to a nearby forest where he wept bitterly at his mistake.

Shahāb ud-dīn, one of the sons of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn, was on intimate terms with Nizām ud-dīn. He informed the Khwāja of the lamentable condition of his friend. At last the Khwāja forgave Nizām ud-dīn and permitted him to return to his presence. On the next day he told Nizām ud-dīn: "I had done this for your betterment. The *Pir* (Spiritual guide) is like

1. *Fawāʾid-ul-Fuwād*, p. 75

a decorator of his disciple." Thereafter he invested Nizām ud-dīn with a robe of honour.[1]

A Decisive Movement

It was undoubtedly a critical moment for Nizām ud-dīn when his spiritual mentor reacted in a sharp and sudden manner over his innocent remark. Verily, it would appear that the Khwāja need not have shown such a resentment over the simple remark that Nizām ud-dīn had seen a better copy of the book with his brother—a statement of fact which was neither wrong nor violated any moral precept. But the Khwāja could not tolerate even this harmless comment by his disciple for he had already chosen him as his future spiritual successor. It was, therefore, necessary for him to teach that disciple a lesson in self-effacement in a way that should destroy even the least vestiges of self-conceit and vanity in him. He had also to take him through that state of anguish and grief, dejection and down-heartedness which every path-finder of the love of God has to experience at one time or the other. But, the occasion was also crucial for a young, educated and intelligent youth since his whole future depended on a correct decision at that decisive moment. The assessment of the situation by Manāzir Ahsan Gīlānī is undoubtedly correct, who says: "It was the time when the genuineness of his yearning had to be tested. The world wanted to know his decision—whether he would remain a mere 'debate-breaker' and a logician as thousands had been before him or he would prove himself worthy of becoming the sultān of seers and mystics. It really depended on his courage

1. *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, p. 27. One should not misunderstand the motive of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn or that his indignation was a violent and vindictive emotional outburst for a petty fault. The spiritual guides adopt different methods for generating a sense of self-effacement and self-abasement in their disciples. The severe test to which Ka'ab ibn Mālik was put by the Prophet of Islam for an unintentional error furnishes another example of the different methods adopted to train and guide a person.

and will as a poet has said :

"To be content with buds but few, thou wert a fool ;
Enough to fill thy blou, garden had floscule."

"He cast away the few buds that he had and decided to own the entire garden. Had he been shallow-headed, he would have reasoned thus : 'What was, after all, my fault ? I committed no wrong. I knew of a better copy and mentioned it to the Sheikh ! Then, why this fit of anger ?' Had he taken to this line of reasoning he would have prolonged it to a length greater than the promptings of the Devil. He would have been led to the conclusion that the old man had lost his balance of mind or that he was blinded by his own glory. He could have even proved the action of his teacher as a clear transgression of the ethical norms taught by the Prophet. But he knew that he had gone to the Sheikh to remedy his own defects and not to point out the faults of his mentor. He knew that the Khwāja was his physician and therefore he had no right to question his teacher's method of treatment."[1]

A Friendly Advice

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn says : "While I was at Ajodhan, one of my old class-mates came there. Grieved as well as surprised to see me in rags, he said. 'What have you made of yourself, Nizām ud-dīn ? Had you taken to teaching in any city you would have become an accomplished scholar and made a fortune'. I offered my excuse to him but when I went to the Khwāja he at once remarked : 'What would be your reply, Nizām ud-dīn, if one of your friends happens to meet you and asks why are you wasting your time here like this and why have you given up the profession of teaching which would have been a stepping stone for your prosperity ?' I said, 'I will say whatever you advise.' 'Whenever anybody raises that question,' said he, 'tell him :

'Thou art not a wayfarer of my path, Off you go ;
Peace be to you, let me be humbled and low'.

1. *Nizām-i-T'ālīm*, Vol. II, pp. 94-95

"Thereafter he ordered me to take a tray of food from the monastery's kitchen to my friend on my head. I did as I was bidden. When my friend saw me coming like that he hurried to take off the tray from me. When I told him what had happened, he replied, 'I never knew that your Sheikh had guided you to such dizzy heights of selflessness! Take me to him.' After he had taken his meals, he asked his servant to carry the tray back but I refused and insisted on taking the tray back on my head as I had brought it. We both went to the Khwāja and he became his disciple."[1]

Nizām ud-dīn went thrice to Ajodhan.[2] It is, however, not known when he was himself allowed to take disciples in the *Chishtiyah* order. None of the chroniclers has mentioned the year of the visit when he was granted the habit of succession.

Blessings by the Khāwja

Once the Khwāja called for Nizām ud-dīn after Friday prayers.[3] He put his saliva in the mouth of Nizām ud-dīn and bade him to learn the Qur'ān by heart. Thereafter he said, "God has bestowed upon you the good of this world and the world beyond. This is what one can obtain here." The Khwāja then asked him to go to Delhi. He said: "Go and capture Hindustan.'

It has been stated in *Siar-ul-Auliā'* that Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn wrote a *khilāfat-nāmah* in favour of Nizam ud-dn and asked him to show it to Maulnā Jamāl ud-dīn in Hansī and Qāzī Muntajab in Delhi. The Khwāja also remarked: "You would

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, pp. 139-40
2. *Fawāi'd-ul-Fuwād*, p. 42
3. The date mentioned in *Siar-ul-Auliā'* is 25th Jamada ul-Ula, 669 A. H. but this appears to be wrong. It should be 664 A. H., the year of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn's demise, as mentioned elsewhere in *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, or, we would have to agree with *Khazinatul Asfiā* which gives the year of his death as 670 A. H.
4. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 123

be like a shade-tree beneath which the people would get rest and repose. Give yourself up to prayer and fasting in order to lead your soul on the pathway of purity."

Request of a Prayer

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn also requested his Sheikh, on the first of Shᶜabān, to pray for him so that he might not have to depend upon the people. Khwaja Farīd ud-dīn accepted his request and prayed for him.[1]

On another occasion Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn told Nizām ud-dīn: "I have prayed to God to confer on you something of the world also." Troubled to hear this, for, many a people were led astray by it, Nizām ud-dīn showed signs of distress. Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn, however, assured him, "For you the world shall not be a temptation. Rest assured."[2]

From Ajodhan to Delhi

After taking leave of his spiritual guide Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn took the road to Delhi on his sacred mission of guiding the people and purifying them of their evil and immoral traits. But he was then a poor wayfarer on his way to the renowned capital of the most powerful Muslim kingdom in the seventh century after *Hijrah*, whose only equipment for this formidable task was trust in God, sincerity and utter indifference to the world and everything it stands for. Manāzir Ahsan Gīlānī has given a beautiful description of Khwaja Nizām ud-dīn's journey to Delhi in these words: "Now he sets out from Ajodhan to triumph over Delhi, the capital of Hindustan, where innumerable gods have arrayed themselves from highest of the high to the lowest of the low; there are amongst them those on whose orders heads roll on the ground and also those who confer riches and glory on their meanest servitors. Ranks and honours are being distributed freely; pleasures and fortunes are being

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, p. 123
2. *Ibid.*, p. 132

given out with both hands. And, this king of the saints is well up in all those arts and learnings which are required to feather one's nest. You have already seen that before coming to Ajodhan, he was known as a 'debate breaker' in the educated circles of Delhi. He finds all the doors from the office of a Qāzī to that of *Sheikh-ul-Islam* or *Sadar-i-Jahān* opened for him. But the love of the Creator has been so deeply embedded in his heart that it has expelled the longing for every worldly gain. It was this sublime quality of heart which he often described in these words : Nobody's faith is complete unless the whole creation is to him not worth the camel's dung.[1]

"Once somebody told Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn of a certain person who devoted himself night and day in prayers at Damascus just for achieving the office of *Sheikh-ul-Islām*. The Khwāja, his eyes brimming with tears, replied : 'Burn *Sheikh-ul-Islāmī* first and then the monastery and last of all your own ego.'[2]

"In fine, he left Ajodhan after consigning to flames all the worldly longings and desires..............and arrived in the capital empty handed where he had to rule as a spiritual monarch."[3]

Fulfilment of his Obligations

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn relates that his Sheikh had directed him to always fulfil his obligations and never keep anybody displeased with him. The Khwāja had purchased some cloth from a cloth dealer at Delhi for which he owed 20 *Jītals*[4] to him and had also to return a book lost by him to one of his friends. When he reached Budaun, on his way back to Delhi from Ajodhan, he made up his mind to satisfy these obligations first. Accordingly, on reaching Delhi he laboured hard for a few days and as soon as he had saved 10 *Jītals* he approached the cloth

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 551
2. *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, p. 23
3. *Nizām-i-Tā'līm*. Vol. II. p. 150
4. Jītal or Chītal was a copper coin.

dealer. He gave him the money he had with him and promised to return the remaining amount as soon as possible. The cloth dealer took the amount given by the Khwāja but remarked: "It seems, you are coming from amongst the Muslims. I forego my claim for the remaining sum."

Thereafter the Khwāja went to the man from whom he had taken the book on loan and told him that since the book had been lost, he would prepare another copy of it for him. He also gave up his claim but observed: "It was only natural for you to do so after visiting the place you are coming from."[1]

In Delhi

When the Khwāja returned to Delhi, it was a populous and expanding city but for quite some time, till he took up his residence at Ghiyāthpūr he had no proper abode. He had so frequently to change his habitations that, it seems, he could not manage to have even a hut where he could live in peace. Mīr Khurd relates the story of the Khwāja's dwelling places in those days in the words of his father Saiyid Mahmmad Mubārak Kirmānī:

"So long as the Khwāja lived in the city he had no house of his own nor he tried to have one for him. When he came from Budaun, he rented a house in Sarāi' Miān Bazār which was also called Namak ki Sarāi'. Amīr Khusrū then also lived in the same locality. After some time, on the recommendation of Amīr Khusrū, he was allowed to live in the house of his maternal grandfather Rāwat 'Arz.[2] He lived in this house for two years. The house was situated near Mandh Gate and Mandh Bridge by the side of the city's outer wall. It was quite a good building of stately structure with spacious chambers but when the sons of Rāwat 'Arz returned, the Khwāja had to vacate the house. He had nothing except books with him which we carried on our heads to a mosque in front of Sirāj Baqqāl. On the next day,

1. *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, p. 14
2. Also known as Imādul-Mulk

a disciple of Sheikh Sadr ud-dīn, Sᶜad Kāgzī by name, took the Khwāja to his own house and lodged him in the upper apartments. Khwāja remained there for a month and then got a house in the Sarai of Rakābdār near Qaisar Bridge. After some time he took up his residence in the house of Shādī Gulābī, near the shop of Muhammad, a fruit-seller. In the meantime, the sons and relatives of Shams ud-dīn Sharāb-dār[1], who were devoted disciples of the Khwāja begged him to occupy a portion of their own house. He lived there in peace for several years."[2]

Frugal living

When the Khwāja arrived at Delhi, he had to face those sufferings and tribulations which have to be endured by all those who are elevated and illuminated and desire to show the path of virtue to others. This was the time when Delhi was rolling in the wealth pouring from the four corners of Hindustan. Everything was so plentiful and cheap that two seers of bread could be had for one *Jītal* and a maund of musk-melon for just two *Jītals*. But the Khwāja had to pass his days in such a state of extreme poverty that occasionally he could not provide even a loaf of bread for himself and his dependants. Nor could he afford the luxury of enjoying a musk-melon although it was so cheap ! But not only reconciled to his frugal living he even longed to pass on his days in that wise.[3]

Once when he was residing in the house near Mandh Gate, he had to go with empty stomach for a few days. At last, a student who was aware of it informed some of his neighbours who were weavers by profession. They brought some edibles for him but while he was washing his hands to take the food, some one remarked : "God may bless the student who told us about you." "What did he say"? enquired the Khwāja. "He informed us," the man replied, "that you had nothing to satisfy

1. The royal servant appointed to provide drinking water to the king.
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 108
3. *Ibid.*, p. 108

the pangs of hunger for quite a few days. That is why we have brought it to you." "Excuse me then," said the Khwāja and refused to take it in spite of their insistence.[1]

Death of His Sheikh

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn paid the last visit to his Sheikh, Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn three or four months before the latter died. The Khwāja says: "He died on the fifth of Muharram but he had sent me back to Delhi in the month of Shawwāl.[2] Since he had already been taken ill, he was not keeping fasts during Ramadhān. One day someone brought musk-melons, one of which I placed before him in pieces. The Sheikh took them and gave one piece to me. I thought of taking that precious gift even if I might have to keep expiatory fasts continuously for two months in lieu of breaking the obligatory fast on that day.. But he forbade me saying, 'Oh, No. The *Sharīʿah* permits me but not you.'"[3]

"The Sheikh had me in his thoughts before he died", continues Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn, "for he said to those present; 'Nizām ud-dīn is in Delhi. I was also away in Hānsī when my Sheikh Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī died.' The Sheikh also wept while saying this."[4]

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn went to Ajodhan after the Sheikh had passed away. Maulānā Badr ud-dīn made over the Sheikh's robe, prayer mat and staff to him as desired by the Sheikh.[5]

In Ghiyāthpūr

It has been related in *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād* that the Khwāja did not like the din and clamour of Delhi. Once he saw a recluse busy in the remembrance of God at Hauz Qatlagh Khān. The

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1. *Jawāmʿe ul-Kalām*, p. 296
2. In 664 A. H.
3. *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, p. 53
4. *Ibid.*, p. 53
5. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 122

Khwāja asked him if he had chosen to live in the city of his own accord. He replied in the negative but added that although he wanted to go away, he could not somehow leave the place. Thereupon the Khwāja made up his mind to leave the city for Patiāli[1] where a Turk[2] lived in those days, or to go away to Bishnālah. He once went to Bishnālah and lived there for three days but could not obtain a residence to put up permanently there. Back in Delhi again he earnestly implored God to guide him to a place where he could have peace and repose. As the Khwāja relates, he heard a celestial voice directing him to go to Ghiyāthpūr although he did not then know where the place was. However, he took up his residence at Ghiyāthpūr which was then a quiet and sparsely populated place. When Kaikabād[3] selected Kīlokharī[4] for his residence, Ghiyāthpur was crowded with the royal chiefs and retinues. The Khwāja again thought of leaving the place. One day he happened to be present in the last rites of one of his teachers in the city, where a lean and thin but agreeably good-looking man had also come. No sooner than he came, he addressed the Khwāja with a couplet which meant:

> You had to know, the day you were made a moon of goodly frame;
> Cynosure of all eyes, on every tongue would be your name.

He also told the Khwāja that a man should first avoid becoming far-famed, but once he had come in the lime-light, he should try to prove himself worthy of it so that he might not have to lose face before the Prophet on the Day of Reckoning.

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1. A town in district Etah
2. Amīr Khusrū
3. Sultān Mu'iz ud-dīn, Kaikabād, the son of Bughra Khān and grandson of Ghiyāth ud-din Balban, who ruled for three years from 686 A. H. to 688 A. H.
4. Sir Saiyid writes in *Athār us-Sanādīd*: "Mu'iz ud-dīn Kaikabād built a fort and named it Kilokharī in 685 A. H. The fort is no more now but a village of that name still exists near Humaun's tomb (p. 82).

The man then said to the Khwāja: "Is it at all virtuous to devote oneself to God's recollection only after retiring from the world?" He wanted to impress that the remembrance of God along the walk of life needs a greater strength of character. When he had finished talking, the Khwāja brought some food for him, but he made no move until Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn resolved that he would not leave Ghiyāthpūr. Thereafter he ate a bit and went away.[1]

Popular Regard

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn began to attract attention and esteem of the people during his stay at Ghiyāthpūr. Quite a large number of people started paying visit to him for moral and spiritual purification at his hand.

The chroniclers have not given the details when the rising popular regard for the Khwāja started to draw people to Ghiyāthpūr. It has only been stated by them that for a time after taking up residence at Ghiyāthpūr, he had to live from hand to mouth. During the hottest summer days he had to walk down to the distant Jamʿī Masjid. At last privation gave place to abundance: an elegant superabundance combined with lavish generosity which surpassed even the splendour of the Delhi durbars. Amīr Khusrū has aptly depicted the Khwāja's majesty in these verses:

A sovereign is he in mendicant's closet;
Over the kingdom of heart runs whose writ;
A prince, who has no sceptre nor crown;
The earth beneath whose feet, the kings would covet.

A Bounteous Friar

Whoever came from far or near was allowed to pay his respect to the Khwāja who gave to the visitor some cash, a robe or a gift or whatever he had at hand. Everything brought to him as a present was gifted away by him: nobody ever returned

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 129

empty-handed from him.[1]

Khwāja Nasīr ud-dīn *Chirāgh Dehli* relates: "It seemed that a river of riches flowed beneath his feet. People came from early morn till dusk or even late in night; those who brought the gifts were fewer than those whom he sent back laden with a largess; the Khwāja always gave more than whatever one brought in presentation to him."[2]

Always on getting up after the afternoon nap he used to ask whether the time for *ʿasr* prayer had arrived and whether someone was waiting for him.[3] He never liked that anybody should have to wait for him.

The more his fame and popularity increased drawing larger crowds to his doors, the more he became indifferent to the world and its attractions. Often he wept at the presents brought to him and tried to dole out everything at the earliest opportunity. Sometimes he would direct his attendants to distribute everything left with him to the needy and poor and heaved a sigh of relief when nothing remained with him. On Fridays, before the Khwāja left for prayers, all the stores and rooms of the monastery were swept clean to ensure that nothing remained with the inmates and disciples. The visit of any prince or chief or the announcement of a gift brought by them very often called forth the cynical remark from the Khwāja: "Why has he come to waste my time?"[4]

Indifference to Worldly Possessions

Amīr Hasan ʿAlā' Sajazī relates that once when he happened to be present there, a certain noble sent a transfer deed assigning a grove, some agricultural land and other property to the Khwāja with a request to accept the same. The Khwāja smiled and remarked: "Now people will say that the Sheikh

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1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*
2. *Sirāj-ul-Majālis* (Tr. *Khair-ul-Majālis*), p. 310
3. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 126
4. *Ibid.*, p. 129

has gone to see his grove or the crop. What have I to do with all these? None of my Sheikhs ever had any land or property."[1]

The Imperial Kitchen

The Khwāja kept fast ever and anon. But dishes of different varieties and tastes were always served up to the visitors, young and old, poor and rich, who were not only fed to their heart's content but also allowed to take home whatever they liked. The victuals served at the Khwaja's monastery were of the highest quality that the nobles and chiefs of the State found difficult to afford, and remembered long once they had tasted them. Quite apart from the spiritual regeneration of those who paid a visit to the Khwāja, his unbounded munificence and filling of the empty stomachs speaks of his bountiful generosity to the poor and lowly. Of the Khwāja's generosity Manāzir Ahsan Gīlānī writes:

> "Those who wag their tongue to sympathise with the poor in their table talks would hardly be aware that these very mystics of Islam were the connecting link between the rich and the poor. Their's were the courts which demanded tribute from the kings. Such was the royal court of the Khwāja that even Khizr Khān, the heir-apparent of the kingdom was his devotee. Tolls and tithes flowed to the coffers of ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn Khiljī from every part of the country but he, too, had to pay an impost to this exchequer......... These very monasteries were the channels which conveyed the shares of the indigent and beggers to them. And this is what is meant by the adage: The property of a mystic is for the common good."[2]
>
> "These mystics were the bridge along which both the poor and the rich walked to understanding. Both presented themselves before the mystics in the same capacity—very many people had their needs satisfied through them.

1. *Fawāʾid-ul-Fuwād,* p. 99
2. *Nizām-i-Tʿālīm,* Vol. II, p. 214

Of a fact, there was hardly a time when in every part of the then India the prophetic injunction—collect from the well-to-do and distribute to the poor—was not implemented by these pure-hearted souls. Wherever any mystic was held in esteem by the people of rank and authority, the poor always stood to gain by it."[1]

The Khwāja always joined in the repast with his guests but he seldom took anything except a bread or half with vegetables or a little quantity of rice. Often he remained sitting with others at the repast but took nothing at all.[2]

Disregard of the Royalty

From the very beginning the guiding principle of the *Chishtiyah* order in India had been to reform and regenerate the Indian Muslim society in accordance with the teachings of Islam but, at the same time, to remain unsolicitous of the royal favours. As earnest seekers of truth, the earlier *Chishtī* mystics had held fast to this golden rule as a sacred patrimony of their precursors and spiritual guides. From Khwāja Moʿīn ud-dīn to Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn, every mystic saint remained completely indifferent to the royalty which helped them to keep their mission clearly aloof from the political upheavals of the times. Numerous dynasties held the reigns of government and tumbled down but the sincerity and indifference to wealth and dignity on the part of these *sufī* saints allowed them to propagate their mission remitlessly over hundreds of years—and this was perhaps the reason for the wide popularity it gained among the masses.

Since the day Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn was nominated for the spiritual conquest of the country, seven kings adorned the throne of Delhi Sultanate; some of them were extremely haughty; others ruled with pomp and splendour; but the Khwāja never graced the royal court by his presence (except once when he was called upon to take part in a disputation

1. *Nizām-i-Tʿalīm*, Vol. II, p. 240
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 125

about the lawfulness of musical recitations), nor he allowed any king to pay a visit to him.

The Khwāja had still not achieved the eminence by the time of Ghiyāth ud-dīn Balban, so the latter did not take much notice of him. Muᶜiz ud-dīn Kaikbād was too pre-occupied with hunting and amusements to pay any attention to him. Jalāl ud-dīn Khiljī was, however, the first King who was himself an accomplished scholar and connoisseur who patronised men of letters and talent. The Khwāja had also then reached the pinnacle of his fame. Jalāl ud-dīn Khiljī expressed his wish several times to be allowed to pay homage to the Khwāja, but the latter always turned down his request. At last, he planned with Amīr Khusrū to secretly visit the Khwāja without informing him. Amīr Khusrū, however, thought it imprudent to keep his Sheikh in the dark and he broke the news to him. The Khwāja immediately made up his mind to visit the shrine of his own Sheikh at Ajodhan. When the King came to know of it, he chided Amīr Khusrū for leaking out his secret, but Amīr Khusrū replied : "Displeasure of the King posed a danger to my life but that of the Sheikh would have laid open my faith to peril." The wise and generous King, that Jalāl ud-dīn Khiljī was, kept quite at this answer.[1]

Khwāja Put to Test

Sultān ᶜAlā᾽ ud-dīn Khiljī ascended the throne after his uncle Jalāl ud-dīn Khiljī. Lordly and arrogant by nature, this "second Alexander" of India was neither devoted to the Khwāja in the beginning nor bore any ill-will against him. But certain persons envious of the Khwāja tried to embitter the King against him. They told the King that the growing popularity of the Khwāja was fraught with danger to the kingdom. In order to test the sincerity of the Khwāja he wrote a letter requesting for prayer and his advice for conducting the administration, and deputed his son and heir-apparent Khizr Khān to

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā᾽*, p. 135

bear the letter to the Khwāja. When the letter was delivered to him, he took it in his hand but did not read it. Instead, addressing those who were then present, he said, "I pray for the King." Thereafter he added; "What have we, the mendicants, to do with the King. Like a recluse I have withdrawn to this corner to pray for the welfare of the King and the Muslims. But if the King should disapprove of it, I shall go away from here. God's earth is wide enough." Pleased with the reply given by the Khwāja, the King observed: "I already knew that the Khwāja is least concerned with the affairs of the kingdom, but malicious people wanted me to pick up a quarrel with him so that the country should go to ruin."[1]

The King apologised for the letter sent by him and expressed his devotion to the Khwāja. He also requested Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn to allow him to pay a visit to him but he replied: "The King need not come. I shall pray for him in his absence which is more efficacious."[2]

Sultān ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn Khiljī repeatedly made requests to see the Khwāja. When the King became more insistent the Khwāja replied: "I have two doors in my house. If the King enters from the one, I shall go out from the other."[3]

Sultān ʿAlā ud-dīn Khiljī, however, still continued to have the highest regard for the Khwāja whom he requested to pray for him whenever he had any worry or anxiety. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn always solemnly beseeched God on behalf of the King on such occasions.

A historian of the time, Qazi Ziāʾ ud-dīn Barnī writes: "When Malik Naiʾb[4] had laid the siege of Warangal, the communications to Tilangana broke down and the Sultān could not get any news about his forces for more than forty days. The Sultān felt worried about the safety of his troops while certain

1. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, p. 134
2. *Ibid.*, p. 135
3 *Ibid.*, p. 135
4. Malik Kāfūr

courtiers apprehended the possibility of some disaster or defeat as the cause of the disruption of communications from the front. One day, in a moment of despairing anxiety, the Sultān deputed Malik Qarā Beg and Qāzī Mughīth ud-dīn of Bayanah to convey his mental disquiet to the Khwāja. The King asked them to tell the Khwāja that since he was even more solicitous than him about the welfare of Islam and its adherents, he might let him know about the welfare of the army if his illuminated self had any prognostication about it. He also instructed his messengers to exactly report the reply given by the Khwāja. When the two courtiers conveyed the message to the Khwāja, he started relating the victories achieved earlier by the King and then added : 'But these are nothing as compared to those we expect in future'. The King was much pleased to learn the reply given by the Khwāja for he was assured that Warangal would have been captured by the time. The same day, after *ʿasr* prayers, the emissaries, sent by Malik Naib, arrived with his letter describing the success of his expedition. The letter was read out by the pulpiters after Friday prayers, the victory was announced by the beat of drums and the people in their happiness raised the strains of inward joy. This incident also increased the King's devotion and regard for the Khwāja."[1]

On another occasion, when the Mongols attacked India, the Sultān himself marched out, placing himself at the head of his troops, to drive back the invaders. He sent a message requesting the Khwāja to invoke divine succour at that critical moment. The Khwāja instructed all the inmates of his monastery to pray and himself earnestly entreated God for the victory of the Sultān. After a few days the news was received that the Sultān's valour had brought decisive victory to his arms and the invaders had fled in a rapid and disorderly retreat.[2]

One of the Sultān's courtiers, Qāzī Ziā' ud-dīn, relates that ʿAlā' ud-dīn never spoke disparagingly of the Khwāja. Although

1. *Tārīkh Fīroz Shāhī*, p. 333
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 160

there were several persons who described the Khwāja's bountiful generosity and popularity in a manner calculated to arouse jealously in the King's heart but he never gave ears to them. The Sultān's regard for the Khwāja gradually developed into a respectful submission but he could never meet the Khwāja.

Qutb ud-dīn's Animosity

After ʿAlā' ud-dīn had breathed his last, his second son Qutb ud-dīn Mubārak Shāh ascended the throne depriving the rightful claimant and heir-apparent Khizr Khān. Since Khizr Khān had been devoted to the Khwāja, Qutb ud-dīn Mubārak Shāh nursed a feeling of resentment against the Khwāja too which developed into hostility with the passage of time. Qutb ud-dīn built a new Jāmʿi Mosque which he named "Masjid Mīrī", and ordered all the theologians and divines of Delhi to perform the Friday prayers therein. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn, however, refused to comply with the royal command, replying that he had a mosque near his house which had a greater claim upon him. This further enraged the King. The relations between the two were so strained that when the Khwāja once saluted the King, on coming across him in the shrine of Sheikh Ziā' ud-dīn Rūmī, the latter refrained even from exchanging the greetings. Another incident, however, provided the King with an opportunity to declare his foolish intentions which he might have concealed for long in his bosom. According to the custom followed in those days, all the grandees, officers and respectable citizens were required, on the first day of every lunar month, to present themselves before the monarch for salutation and presentation of gifts to him. The Khwāja, however, never went on these occasions but used to send his servant, Iqbāl, as his deputy. Feeling slighted by the proxy, the King ordered that none amongst his chiefs and officers should henceforth visit Ghiyāthpūr to pay respect to the Khwāja. Amīr Khusrū relates that the king even said: "Whoever would bring the head of the Sheikh, he shall be rewarded one thousand *Tankas*."[1]

1. The silver coin of the time.

The King publicly announced his intention: "If he does not turn up next time I would know how he comes." The King's intention perhaps was to have Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn brought to the court as a prisoner or he might have even decided to get rid of him once for all. The Khwāja was told of the King's resolve. But indifferent to the peril threatening him, the Khwāja remained quiet. One after one the days were running out. "The month began to draw to a close", says Manāzir Ahsan Gīlānī,[1] "and with it every well-wisher of the Khwāja began to worry himself sick. At last, the new moon was also sighted. Now everyone entitled to admittance before the King shall present himself before the morach on the coming day. But the Khwāja is still adamant and has decided not to visit the King, who, on his part, is also firm on his declared resolve: 'I would know how he comes.' Only the night is to pass for the day, dreaded by the citizens of Delhi, when the two Sultāns, one of the temporal world and the other of the spiritual realm shall clash their arms. The fateful night had still not folded up when the King's doom was sealed. Khusrū Khān[3] seized the King by the hair, the two grappled each other but Khusrū Khān succeeded in thrusting a dagger in the abdomen of the King who came crashing down to the ground. Khusrū Khān severed his head[3] from the body and flung it down into the courtyard of

1. *Nizām-i-T'ālīm*, Vol. II, p. 230
2. Khusrū Khān, in whom the Sovereign placed implicit confidence, was a low caste convert to Islam. His acceptance of Islam was merely the cloak under which he concealed his deadly hatred of the faith and his determination to conspire against the King in order to gain the throne for himself.
3. The author of *Siar-ul-Auliā'* does not give the date when the king was beheaded. *Firishta* fixes the incident on the fifth of Rab'i-ul-Awwal, 721 A. H. (Vol. I, p. 227) but at another place he gives the date as 29th Shawwāl (Vol. II, pp. 740-41). But greater reliance can be placed on Amīr Khusrū's *Tughlaq Nāmah* which was composed during the reign of Sultān Ghiyāth ud-dīn Tughlaq. It states that the incident happened in Jamāda-ūl-Ukhrā, in the night the new moon was sighted (p. 19).

the Imperial Palace of Thousand Pillars."[1]

The Mysterious Repast

During the period when Sultān Qutub ud-dīn had forbidden his courtiers to pay a visit to the Khwāja, spies had also been deputed by him to bring intelligence how the Khwāja managed his imperial kitchen after the cessation of all gifts and presents by the royal entourage. Sheikh Nasīr ud-dīn, *Chirāgh Dehli* relates that "when the Sheikh was apprised of the King's order, he directed his attendants to increase the quantity of victuals cooked in his kitchen. After a few days the King enquired about the matter and was told that the quantity of food-stuff had since been doubled by the Khwāja." Surprised to hear the reply, he remarked: "I was mistaken. He seems to get his sustenance from unknown sources."[2]

Ghiyāth ud-dīn Tughlaq

During the brief period of his despotic rule, Khusrū Khān let no opportunity go by of insulting and ridiculing the faith which he hated at heart. In 721 A.H. Ghiyāth ud-dīn Tughlaq (Malik Ghāzī) marched upon the capital and established the Tughlaq dynasty after putting the usurper to sword. Ghiyāth ud-dīn was not a scholar but he showed due deference to the *Shāriʿah* and the doctors of religion. The Khwāja used to have sittings of musical recitations which had then become popular in the capital. A certain person named Hosām ud-dīn Farjām, who had been with the Khwāja for quite some time but had remained unenlightened despite the prayers and penance under-

1. *Qasr-i-Hazār Sitūn,* as it was named because of the large number of pillars utilized in its construction, was built by ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn in 1303 A. D., on the place he encamped outside Delhi to give battle to the Mongol invader Targhi. The *Qasr* must have been as grand and beautiful as other buildings of ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn, but unfortunately its complete destruction later on renders it difficult to locate its site with any amount of certainty.

2. *Khair-ul-Majālis,* p. 310-11

taken by him, was a trusted councillor of the King. Qāzī Jalāl ud-dīn, the Deputy Chief of State was also hostile to the mystics. The Qāzī and few other theologians prevailed upon Hosām ud-dīn Farjām to bring it to the notice of the King that the Khwāja's participation in these musical rhapsodies, deemed unlawful by Imām Abū Hanīfa, provided an excuse to others to indulge in and promote a practice prohibited by the *Sharīʿah.* The King being unaware of the legal position in this regard, was amazed to hear that a scholar and divine revered by all could be accused of anything impermissible by the *Sharīʿah.* A number of juristic opinions declaring musical recitations unlawful were produced before the King who agreed to convene a council to examine the correct legal position in this regard. The meeting was convened and the Khwāja invited to it, which has been thus described by Mīr Khurd: "The Khwāja was summoned to the Imperial Palace. He was accompanied by Qāzī Muhī ud-dīn Kāshānī and Fakhr ud-dīn Zarrādī, both of whom were erudite scholars. Qāzī Jalāl ud-dīn opened the proceedings with a sermon calling upon the Khwāja to desist from the practice. The way he addressed the Khwāja was not only unbefitting but he even proceeded to threaten him with punishment if he still persisted in looking upon it as a lawful practice. Indignant at the arrogant remarks of Qāzī Jalal ud-dīn, the Khwāja remarked: 'You shall be dismissed from the office which makes you brag your tongue.' And twelve days thereafter the Qāzī was dismissed and made to leave Delhi. In fine, all the scholars, jurists and theologians, and the King too, anxiously awaited the Khwāja to expound the correct juristic position in regard to the matter under discussion. Hosām ud-dīn Farjām levelled the charge that people whirled and danced and made loud excited utterances in the musical sittings held by the Khwāja. 'Dont make noise. Instead of continuing your allegations first define musical recitation,' demanded the Khwāja from Hosām ud-dīn. Farjām admitted that he did not know what constituted a musical recitation but added that the jurists held it unlawful. 'Then', replied the

Khwāja, 'I need not answer the charges levelled by a man who does not know what the issue is.' Hosām ud-din Farjām was thus put to shame. The King gave ear to the speech of the Khwāja and forbade others to speak loudly or interrupt him. Among the scholars present in the meeting Hamīd ud-dīn and Shahāb ud-dīn mostly kept quiet. The former, however, deposed that the description of the Khwāja's sittings of musical recitations, as given by Farjām and others were incorrect as he had himself attended these sittings as well as those held by other saints and friars.............In the meantime ʿAlam ud-dīn, the grandson of Sheikh-ul-Islam Bahā' ud-dīn Zakariya Multānī arrived. The King asked him whether musical sittings were permissible or prohibited. He replied that he had discussed the matter at length in his monograph on the subject. It was lawful for those who listened to these recitations to warm the cockles of their heart for spiritual elevation but unlawful for those who wanted to gratify their senses. In reply to a further question asked by the King he said that in Baghdād, Rūm[1] and Syria the mystics attended these recitations but nobody ever raised any objection. He added that the practice was followed by the mystics even during the times of Junaid and Shiblī.

Jalāl ud-dīn implored the King to forbid musical recitations by a royal decree in order to uphold the juristic view held by the theologians of Hanafite school. Thereupon the Khwāja asked the King not to issue any edict on the subject. The King accepted the Khwāja's recommendation and did not issue any order.[2]

Qazī Ziā' ud-dīn Barnī writes in *Hasrat Nāmah* that when the Khwaja returned from the meeting he called for Muhī ud-dīn Kāshāni and Amīr Khusrū. He told them that the theologians and jurists of Delhi were filled with bitterness and envy; they gave vent to their indignation when they found an opportunity but it was surprising that they gave preference to the

1. Modern Turkey
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'* (Summarised), pp. 527-32

juristic opinions of the Imāms over the Traditions of the Prophet. The Khwāja was grieved to find the theologians rejecting a Tradition merely because Imām Shafe'ī had relied upon it while their own Imāms had disagreed from him. At last the Khwāja observed: "I had never seen a scholar who refused to give heed to an authentic Tradition of the Prophet. I do not know what is going to happen to the city? No city can flourish where a behaviour so outrageous can be tolerated. No wonder if this city goes to rack and ruin! Where the King and the nobles and the common folk hear the Qāzīs and the *'ulamā* asserting that they do not follow the Prophet's Traditions, how would they continue to have faith in them? I fear that the disbelief of the religious scholars of this city might invite the curse of Heaven in the shape of calamity and disaster, famine and pestilence."[1]

Destruction of Delhi

The fear expressed by Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn was not unfounded. Exactly six years after his foreboding, Muhammad Tughlaq, the son and successor of Ghiyāth ud-dīn Tughlak, suddenly issued a decree for vacating Delhi and migrating to Devagiri, renamed by him as Daulatabad. He enforced his order with such a haste and unreasoning obstinacy that the capital became desolate. In a city where formerly it was difficult to procure a house, no living being except wild beasts were seen. Muhammad Qāsim Bijāpuri writes in *Tarīkh Firishtā*: "The functionaries of the State did not allow a single inhabitant of the city, habituated to its climate, to remain there. They despatched everybody to Devagiri, and Delhi became so devastated and depopulated that no voice except that of the jackals, foxes and other wild beasts was to be heard there."[2]

All those theologians and jurists who had arraigned themselves against the Khwāja in the Imperial Palace had to leave

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'* (Summarised), pp. 527—32
2. *Tārīkh Fīrishtā,* V. I, p. 243

Delhi alongwith others; many of them perished in the course of the long and strenuous march towards Devagiri; those who reached the new capital were destroyed by famine and pestilence and, thus, the grim prediction of the Khwāja came true within a decade.

Daily Routine of the Khwāja

The Khwāja used to come down from his apartment for *ʿishā*ʾ prayers. After performing the same with congregation, he would return to his chamber again where he spent some time in the recollection of God. Thereafter he took a little rest before the attendants handed over to him his rosary. Then nobody excepting Amīr Khusrū was allowed to see him. Amīr Khusrū used to sit down near his cot relating the topic of the day or other matters. The Khwāja often nodded his head to signify his assent or asked: "Turk, what is the news." This gave an opportunity to Amīr[1] to put two and two together and make it five. The Khwāja asked about something and Amīr utilized the opportunity to relate the whole story. Often the Khwāja also permitted the children or relatives to come and join the sitting at this hour.

Nocturnal Occupation

After Amīr Khusrū and others present at the time had taken leave to depart, the Khwāja's personal attendant Iqbāl used to bring a few jugs filled with water for performing ablution. Thereafter the Khwāja used to bolt the doors from inside and then nobody knew how he occupied himself to attain

1. The biographies as well as the poems of Amīr Khusrū speak volumes of his deep, quiet and enduring affection founded upon his attachment and esteem for the Khwāja. The Khwāja's kindly feeling for his disciple is disclosed by what he once said to Amir Khusrū: "I sometimes get tired of myself but never with you.' (*Siar-ul-Aulia*ʾ, p. 302). Another time the Khwāja told Amīr Khusrū: "A man asked me to lay my eyes upon him as I look upon you. I kept quiet but I thought of telling him first to prove himself worthy of it." (*Ibid.*, p. 302).

the propinquity of God or to what lofty stations he was raised by the Divine grace.

Sahūr

When the time came for *Sahūr*, the attendant used to tap the door. He brought dishes of different cooked victuals but the Khwāja took but a little of these and instructed to keep them for the children. Khwāja ᶜAbdur Rahim, who was charged with this duty relates that sometimes the Khwāja ate almost nothing at *Sahūr*. When he was requested to take a bit more since he had eaten very little at the time of *Iftār*, he would break out into tears and say: "How many destitutes and poor would be lying hungry on the stairs and platforms of the mosques? How can I take all this when they are in such a great distress." The food brought to the Khwāja for *Sahūr* had very often to be taken back untouched by him.

In the Day

Those who saw the Khwāja in the morning found his eyes reddish by the night-long vigils but his face would be lit up with heavenly grace, as if by an indescribable happiness of inner bliss, without the least trace of weariness. Nobody could say that the Khwāja would have performed four or five hundred *rakᶜats* of prayer in addition to the chantings in praise of God. Besides the inward illumination of his purified soul, the only occupation that employed him was consolation of the hearts broken by the turmoils of earth, than which there is no nobler task.

The Khwāja could be seen whole day sitting on the prayer mat of his spiritual guide absorbed in the ocean of Divine presence. A stream of visitors which included saints and scholars as well as persons of rank and authority continued all day. The Khwāja conversed with them but he also kept himself inwardly absorbed in the contemplation of Divine perfection.[1]

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, pp. 125-129

After the Khwāja had performed the mid-day prayer, the visitors coming from outside were called in. His kind and comfortable words consoled the wearisome hearts and instructed them in the way of salvation. But nobody, not even the savants and the saved could dare to cast their eyes on the radiant countenance of the Khwāja.

End of the Journey

The Khwāja was over 80 years of age when he had a premonition that his journey's end was drawing near. One day he told his attendants: "I saw the Prophet in the dream. He said, "Nizām, I am anxiously waiting for you'."[1]

During his illness, the Khwāja gave out warrants of vicegerency to several disciples. These were drafted by Fakhr ud-dīn Zarrādī and copied by Saiyid Husain Kirmānī and finally signed by the Khwāja. The date given on these documents being the 20th Zilhijja, A. H. 724, these must have been written three months and twenty-seven days before the Khwāja breathed his last.

Some of the warrants were sent out to the disciples for whom they were meant. To others, the Khwāja granted them personally. First of all Sheikh Qutb ud-dīn Munawwar was asked to present himself. He was granted the warrant and a habit of vicegerency and told to offer thanksgiving prayer. In the meantime Sheikh Nasīr ud-dīn Mahmūd (*Chirāg Dehlī*) was also called in and awarded the robe and the warrant. Sheikh Qutb ud-dīn Munawwar was called again by him and both were told to congratulate and embrace each other. Then, the Khwāja said: "Both of you are brothers. Never mind who got the warrant first."

Forty days before the Khwāja shared the reward of heavenly kingdom, he attained the stage of total absorption and seemed overwhelmed by Divine light. Giving an eye-witness account of the Khwāja's condition before he passed on to his heavenly

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, p. 141

abode, Mīr Khurd says: "It was Friday. The Khwāja seemed to be immersed in Divine light. In the prayer he repeatedly prostrated as if yielding to the grandeur of the Supreme Being. In the same condition, he returned to his residence from the mosque. Tears continuously rolled down from his eyes, he occasionally passed on to ecstatic trances but after short spells he remarked: 'Today it is Friday. A friend recalls to his mind the promise made by the friend and gets engrossed in it.' In the same condition he often asked whether it was time for the prayers and whether he had performed it or not? If he was told that he has already said his prayers, he replied: 'Let me perform it again.' He continued to remain in this condition all through this period.

"Once he called for all the disciples and servants present in the monastery and said: 'All of you shall bear witness on the Day of Judgement that if Iqbāl has withheld anything, he shall be responsible for it before God.' Iqbāl replied: 'I have kept back nothing; everything has been given away.' The man had actually done so and distributed everything to the poor excepting some grains which would have sufficed for the inmates of the monastery for a few days. My uncle Saiyid Husain informed the Khwāja accordingly who angrily demanded from Iqbāl: 'Why have you kept back that rotten dust?' The Khwāja then ordered that the poor and the needy be called. When they had gathered, he said: 'Break open the store. Take away all the grain and sweep it clean.' In a few moments everything was carried away by the crowd.

"During the period of his last illness a few disciples and attendants asked the Khwāja: 'What shall be our lot after you?' He replied: 'You shall get enough to keep your body and soul together.' According to another report I heard from certain reliable persons, the Khwāja was asked: 'Who would be blest with luck amongst us?' They meant who would be the Khwāja's chief spiritual successor. 'Whosoever's luck should favour him', was the reply given by the Khwāja. Some of the friends and attendants requested my maternal grandfather

Shams ud-dīn Damghānī to tell the Khwāja that a number of his disciples who have built palatial buildings are desirous to know where the Khwāja would like to have his eternal resting place. The Khwāja, however, replied that instead of having his grave in one of these houses, he would like to be buried in an open space. Accordingly he was laid to rest in an open field where Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq later built a cupola.

"Forty days before the Khwāja died, he had left taking food.[1] During this period he hated even the smell of cooked victuals. Once he was offered a little soup of fish but he said: 'Throw it away in the running water.' My uncle Saiyid Husain once said to the Khwāja: 'Your honour has not taken anything for the last so many days. That would be harmful.' But the Khwāja replied: 'Saiyid, how could he relish food who is anxious to meet the Holy Prophet?' He not only took no food during these forty days but also spoke very little.

"At last in the forenoon of the eighteenth Rabīʿ ul-Ākhir, 725 A. H. this spiritual star shed its lustre for the last time and passed on to his heavenly abode.

"The funeral prayer of the Khwāja was led by Sheikh ul-Islam Rukn ud-dīn, son of the renowned saint Sheikh Bahā' ud-dīn Zakariyā of Multān. After the prayer Sheikh Rukn ud-dīn observed: "Now I know that for four long years I was detained in Delhi to have the honour of leading this funeral prayer."[2]

The Khwāja never married[3] and had no son but his spiritual sons in succession continued to keep alight the lamp of guidance in different parts of the country.

1. The aversion of the Khwāja could be described as an irresistible impulse of a man immersed in an exalted state of feeling and should not be taken as a rule or custom followed by other mystics.
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, pp. 152-158
3. Marriage is not an impediment to spiritual elevation, nor something looked down upon by the *Sharīʿah* or by the mystics. The Khwāja's decision not to marry was, perhaps, because of his personal circumstances and bent of mind.

III

Character and Achievements

The gifts and talents of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn were perhaps expressed most concisely as well as meaningfully, by his spiritual guide Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn *Ganjshakar* while conferring his vicegerency upon him. He had said : "God has bestowed upon you the gifts of knowledge, intellect and His love ; and anyone combining these qualities is best suited to discharge the responsibilities of a vicegerent."[1]

Sincerity of Purpose

The essence of his character which enabled him to carve out a pride of place not only amongst the saints and *sufīs* of his own time, but also to become a loved and respected personality in the annals of Islam and to gain immortal fame was his wholehearted devotion and the love of God. His sterling sincerity had made this ruling passion of his heart the sole object of his earthly existence and expelled all other desires—the longings for wealth and glory, the love of the world and worldly desires.

"Hail, O Love that bringest us good gain—
thou art the physician of all our ills,
The remedy of our pride and vainglory, our Plato and
our Galen.[1]

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1. *The Mathnawī*, Vol. II, p. 6, Book I, (verses 23-24)

Love is that flame which, when it blazes up, consumes everything else but the Beloved.

He (the lover) drives home the sword of *Not* in order to kill all other than God: Thereupon consider what remains after *Not*.[1]

There remains *except* God: all the rest is gone.

Hail, O mighty Love, destroyer of polytheism.[2]

The whole life of the Khwāja was spent in the sweetest strains that cause one to forget one's own self in love divine and exert a stimulating influence over others to seek the sublime object of human existence. A sheikh[3] of the *Nizāmiyah* order has perhaps best expressed this very feeling of ecstatic rapture in these verses:

"Neither a devotee, nor a clerk in holy order,
Nor yet a *Hāfiz*, nor a zealous believer;
With all the ills that men endure, I would be a lover,
To be sorrow-sick in the sea of troubles, I would clamour."

Having attained the state of peaceful contentment, the Khwāja was always careful that all those disciples who were chosen by him to keep alight the lamp of his mystic order, expelled the liking for wealth and dignity from their hearts. Once Fasīh ud-dīn, a disciple, asked: "Who deserves to become the vicegerent of a spiritual teacher?" "One", replied the Khwāja, "who is not at all keen to become a vicegerent."[4]

Mīr Khurd relates that a reputed disciple of the Khwāja who had been granted the warrant of vicegerency by him, began to put on airs. The Khwāja became so displeased that when he again came to see him, the Khwāja refused to speak to him

1. Alludes to the Quranic verse (XXVII: 88) which says: "And cry not unto any other god along with Allah. There is no God save Him. Everything will perish save His Countenance."
2. *The Mathnawī*, Vol. VI, p. 38, (Book V, verses 588-90)
3. Muhammad ibn Qutub (popularly known as Shāh Mīnā) of Lucknow. (d. 874 A, H.).
4. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 345

and revoked his permission to act as his vicegerent. The Khwāja forgave him only after he had expressed regret over his past behaviour.

Love for the Enemy

On his way to spiritual development, a devotee has to attain that stage of selflessness, renunciation and sincerity where his heart becomes free from all emotions of hatred and revenge and all desires to cause damage or hurt to anyone. He is then not simply humane and cordial to his friends but also develops a genuine kindliness of heart even for those who are hostile to him. In fact, he then supplicates for the prosperity and happiness of his enemies as if the hostility against him is a favour conferred upon him for which he ought to express his heart-felt gratitude.

Amīr ʿAlāʾ Sajazī relates that once the Khwāja remarked in his presence: "Whoever makes my heart bleed, would that God blest him more!" Thereafter the Khwāja recited a couplet which meant:

"Thorns who sows in my way out of ill-will,
May his flower of life blossom without a prickle!"

"A certain person whose name was Jhajjū", says Khwāja Nasīr ud-dīn, "lived in Hisār Indrapat near Ghiyāthpūr. For nothing he bore malice against the Khwāja and spared no effort to abuse and get him into trouble. When he died, the Khwāja not only attended his funeral but also offered two *rakʿats* of prayer on his grave and prayed thus for him: "O God, I have forgiven him for whatever ill he might have thought or done to me. Do not punish him on my accord."[1]

Once, some of his disciples told the Khwāja: "There are a few persons who accuse you publicly and even from the pulpit of the mosque. It becomes difficult for us to keep quiet on these occasions." The Khwāja replied, "I have forgiven all of them. You too should do the same and never pick up a quarrel with

1. *Siar-ul-ʿĀrifīn*

them." Thereafter he added, "If there is a feud between two persons, the surest way to put an end to it is that one of the two should dismiss the feeling of resentment from his heart. After all, why should anybody feel ill of being called names by another person. Does not the adage run : The property of the *Sufi* is a public trust and the spilling of his blood permissible to all! Then why should one quarrel merely for calling names?"[1]

The Khwāja used to tell his disciples that the practice followed by the commonalty was to be kindly to the good and to repay the bad in the same coin but the convention of the men of God was to repay even evil with a kind deed. Once he said, "If someone puts a thorn in your way and you too do the same, the whole path will soon be littered with thorns. A well-known proverb runs : Be a friend of the good and to the wicked a foe ; but the custom of the mystics is to be kind to the friend as well as to the foe."[2] The Khwāja's motto was even still higher. He used to say : "It is bad to speak ill, but to seek ill is even worse."[3]

It is not difficult to conceive the loving kindness that a man with such a rule of conduct had for the descendants and relatives of his own Sheikh. The author of *Siar-ul-Ārifīn* relates that once Khwāja ʿAtaʾ Ullah, the son of Sheikh Najīb ud-dīn's daughter, asked Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn to write a letter to a certain grandee asking him to help ʿAtāʾ Ullah with some money. The Khwāja pleaded his inability on the ground that he was not at all acquainted with the chief nor had that man ever visited him. ʿAtāʾ Ullah got angry and gave loose to the tongue of slander against him. However, the Khwāja did not allow ʿAtāʾ Ullah to go away displeased with him and offered some money to pacify him.[4]

1. *Fawāʾid-ul-Fuwād,* p. 95
2. *Ibid.,* p. 87
3. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, p. 554
4. *Siar-ul-ʿĀrifīn*

Concealing Other's Faults

Mīr Khurd reports that the persons paying a visit to the Khwāja used to bring some present or sweets to offer as a gift to him, which were collected by the attendants and distributed among the visitors and inmates of the monastery. Once a religious scholar brought a packet of dust and put it alongside the gifts brought by others. He had presumed that the Khwāja, who never cared to know what was brought by whom, would not discover his ruse. After a while the Khwāja's attendant came to collect the gifts but the Khwaja asked him to leave that particular packet, saying: "Leave it here. This antimony is meant for my eyes." The theologian immediately apologised for putting him to test and enlisted himself among his disciples.[1]

Affectionate Kindness

Towards the humanity, at large, and the Muslims and those who were in any way connected to him, in particular, the Khwāja had such a deep and kindly feeling which, it would not be exaggeration to say, measured up to the affection of a mother for her children. Of a fact, all those who are perfect in faith inherit the Prophet's solicitude and care for the humanity thus portrayed in the words of God:

> "There hath come unto you a messenger, (one) of yourselves, unto whom aught that ye are overburdened is grievous, full of concern for you, for the believers full of pity, merciful."[1]

To be kind, gentle and considerate with others is really to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet who had been enjoined thus by God:

> "And lower thy wing (in kindness) unto those believers who follow thee."[2]

A kindly affection, deep, tender and constant, going

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 142
2. Q. IX: 128
3. Q. XXVI: 215

out to other human beings imparts such a feeling of oneness and spiritual affinity that the pleasure and pain of others is directly felt by the heart of the person developing such a tender affection. Amīr Hasan ʿAlāʾ Sajazī relates that once, in a gathering which was being addressed by the Khwāja, a few persons were sitting in the sun. The Khwāja stopped his discourse to say, "Brothers, come closer so that those sitting in the sun may get a place in shade. They are sitting in the sun but I am getting burnt."[1]

Once the Khwāja quoted some one, perhaps to refer indirectly to his own feelings, who had said: "God's creation takes food before me and I find it going down my own throat, as if I am myself eating the same."[2]

Amīr Hasan tells one of his own experiences. He once paid an untimely visit to the Khwāja. He had actually come, as he himself says, to see some of his relatives but he did not like to return without meeting the Khwāja even though it was an ill-timed visit. He went and told the Khwāja how had he come at a time ill-suited to him. The Khwāja replied, "You did well. Although the etiquette requires that one should not visit a Sheikh before *ishrāq* in the morning and after *ʿasr* in the evening, but I don't follow these rules. Anyone may come at any time he likes."[3]

Solicitude for Others

Those who have attained the stage of spiritual perfection expel all personal cares and anxieties from their hearts but the welfare of humanity always keeps them vexed and worried: like a friend who sticketh closer than brother, they are friend of all in the world.

Once a certain mystic said to Khwāja Sharaf ud-dīn[4] that Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn had no cares to trouble his mind, neither

1. *Fawāʾid-ul-Fuwād*, p. 91
2. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, p. 77
3. *Fuwāʾid-ul-Fuwād*, Vol. I, p. 98
4. Grandson of a famous mystic, Khwāja Nasīr ud-dīn *Chirāgh Dehli*

a wife nor children whose well-being could stir his heart or worry his head about them. Sharaf ud-dīn went direct from there to the Khwāja but before he could mention it to him, the Khwāja said: "Sharaf un-dīn, the choking disquiet I carry in my heart is of an intensity hardly felt by anybody else. Whosoever comes to me tells his problems which makes me extremely sad. He is really heartless who does not feel the pinch of his brother's worries. Verily the sincere are faced with dangers great! Now you can understand why those who are nearer (to God) remain astounded."[1]

To the Khwāja the greatest virtue which could help one to receive the Light-Divine was to cheer and please a believer and to mitigate his sufferings. Author of *Siar-ul-Auliā'* reports what the Khwāja once said: "In a dream I was given a book. It was written in it that as far as possible one should console the distressed; for, the heart of a believer is the repository of divine secrets. Some body has well said:

"Of the living beings, deaden the pain;
And have the day's bread for the poor and the forlorn."

On another occasion the Khwāja said: "On the Day of Reckoning nothing shall be more valued than the words, kind and comfortable, consideration and solace extended to the worried hearts."[2]

Attachment to Children

The Khwāja, amiable by nature, had a ready affection and kindliness for children. His pre-occupations with the visitors and devotional exercises left him little spare time, but he always found some time to cheer up the children. He took particular care to look after their requirements.

Raf'ī ud-dīn was the grandson of the Khwāja's sister. The Khwāja always awaited his arrival before he started taking

1. *Siar-ul-'Ārifīn*
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 128

his meals no matter who was present at the repast. The Khwāja always took special care for his education and moral guidance.[1] Rafʿi ud-dīn was fond of wrestling, archery and swimming. The Khwāja chatted with him about these sports to gladden and encourage him.[2]

Often the young visitors came to the Khwāja smartly dressed which was disliked by the orthodox because of the airiness of such dresses. The Khwāja, however, never objected and received them courteously and endeavoured to guide them on the path of moral rectitude.

The author of *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, Mīr Khurd, says that once his uncle Saiyid Husain Kirmānī, who was then a young man, was fashionably dressed when he paid a visit to the Khwāja. The Khwāja, on seeing him, said politely: "Come on Saiyid, sit down here and share the benediction."[3]

The benign and winsome treatment of the young by Khwāja Nizam ud-dīn helped many a young men to shake off undue exuberance and gaity and take to righteous living and spiritual development.

The Khwāja's loving heart and sweet disposition had made his manners so amiable and pleasing that one is reminded of the findings of al-Ghazālī after years of wanderings to find the path of Truth and certitude of knowledge.

"I learnt from a sure source that the *sūfīs* are the true pioneers on the path of God; that there is nothing more beautiful than their life, nor more praiseworthy than their rule of conduct, nor purer than their morality. The intelligence of the thinkers, the wisdom of the philosophers, the knowledge of the most learned doctors of the law would in vain combine their efforts in order to modify or improve their doctrine and morals; it would be impossible. With the *sūfīs*,

1. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, p. 203
2. *Ibid.*, p. 203
3. *Ibid.*, p. 203

repose and movement, exterior or interior, are illuminated with the light which proceeds from the Radiance of Prophethood. And what other light could shine on the face of the earth."[1]

1. *Al-Munqidh*, p. 101 (Confessions of Al-Ghazālī, p. 54)

IV

Natural Affection

The pith and marrow of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn's life and character, which illuminated his inner self and inspired his moral zeal, was the fervour of spiritual love arising from the harmony of his soul. The flame of this love which he carried in his self from the very beginning burst into a radiant glow in the practice of spiritual austerities under the paternal guidance of his Sheikh and guide Khwāja Farid-ud-dīn *Ganjshakar* and illuminated the environs of Delhi for more than half a century. The Khwāja's elevated soul which had reached the highest degree of sanctity, diffused the message of divine love to the four corners of the country and comforted innumerable roving spirits. His whole life, his conversations and discourses and his devotional and ecstatic practices point out unmistakably to the same infatuation and innermost warmth of divine love which has been thus described by Iqbāl:

"At last the flames burst forth from every hair of me,
Fire dropped from the veins of my thought."[1]

As related in the *Fawai'd-ul-Fuwād*, once the deathbed accounts of different mystics were being narrated before the Khwāja. Someone told the story of a sheikh who had the name of God on his lips while sinking in the jaws of death. On the

1. *Asrār-i-Khudī*, p. 68 (Translation by Nicholson, p. 145)

edge of tears, the Khwāja recited the verse which meant :

"Washing my cheeks with streaming tears ;
I set my foot to draw near ;
Union with Thee I ardently aspire,
Humming Thy name, I go to deathly slumber.[1]"

Such was the all-consuming love cherished by the Khwāja. It had expelled every other desire from his heart as some one has said : the heart's immortal thirst remained and the rest went up in smoke !

The joyful exhilaration of divine love kept the Khwāja always fresh and beaming with radiance in spite of night long vigils. Even when he had grown quite old, he continuously kept fasts and undertook exhausting devotional exercises but no trace of weariness could be seen on his face. He lived to the ripe old age exceeding eighty years, but even in that advanced age he was always brisk, cheerful and fresh as a daisy.[2]

Musical Recitations

But the flame of love also stirs the blood which then needs the soothing balm of lyrics sung in praise of God.[3] A heart inflamed by the love of God gets an opportunity to shed tears

1. *Fawāʾid-ul-Fuwād*, p. 80
2. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, p. 128
3. Much has been written in favour and against musical recitations (songs unaccompanied by musical instruments) but the middle course appears to be that it is neither a must for devotional exercises nor absolutely unlawful. If recourse is taken to it with moderation and within certain limits, it acts as a means of spiritual upliftment. A well-known Sheikh of the *Chishtiyah* order, Qāzī Hamīd ud-dīn Nāgauri has shed light on musical recitations in these words : "I am Hamīd ud-dīn. I listen to these recitations and hold them lawful for the jurists have also held a similar opinion. I suffer from the pangs of love and musical recitation is a balm for it. Imām Abū Hanīfa has allowed the use of wine when in the opinion of a competent physician it is the only medicine to save one's life. My ailment too is incurable except with the auditions extolling the glory of God and therefore these are permissible for me but unlawful for you" (*Siar-ul-Aqtāb*).

and pacify its consuming passion through these recitations while the tiresomeness of exhausting devotional exercises is cast away by exhilarating love songs. This is the reason given by Jalāl ud-dīn Rūmī too in these verses :

> Therefore *samʿa* (music) is the food of lovers (of God), since therein is the phantasy of composure (tranquillity of mind)
>
> From (hearing) sounds and pipings the mental phantasies gather a (great) strength ; nay, they become forms (in the imagination).
>
> The fire of love is made keen (inflamed) by melodies, just as the fire (ardour) of the man who dropped walnuts (into the water).[1]

Almost the same reason has also been given by the Khwāja in support of these recitals. He says :

"The musical recitations are for the seekers of truth, the faithful and the devotees who are given to arduous orisons and vigils. They have verily a right to soothe their agitated hearts and tired bodies (to regain the lost strength). The Prophet has said that 'your own body has a claim over you.' Thus, when the self is refreshed through these recitals, it again gets busy in its labour of love."[2]

Maulāna Kashānī, another authority on the subject, says : "Assiduous contemplations and exercises rewarded with ecstatic transports and illuminations often become burdensome to the traveller who feels a painful lack of strength resulting from the long and continued strain. This gives rise to alternate conditions known as contrition and radiance in his spiritual ascent. That is why the mystics of old have prescribed musical recitations—the melodies of harmonious voice—to retouch the spiritual vigour provided, of course, these do not overstep the limits set by the law."[3]

1. *The Mathnawī*, Vol. IV, p. 313 (Book IV, verses 742-74)
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, p. 198
3. *Misbāh-ul-Hidāyet*, p. 141

The mystics also maintain that these recitations help the traveller on his path and illumine and revivify his spirit.

The Khwāja, however, never took the musical recitations as an aid to or on indispensable part of devotional exercises. He occasionally took recourse to them simply as a spiritual nourishment. Delineating the essential requisites of a lawful recitation he says:

"*Samʿa* (musical recitation) is of four types, viz, lawful, prohibited, unbecoming and permissible. If the listener is inclined more to the Primal Being, the recital is permissible; if he is more attracted to a finite being, it is unbecoming; if he is exclusively absorbed in a mortal being, it is prohibited; but it is lawful if the true love in which the listener is engrossed is none but Almighty God. Therefore, whosoever is fond of such recitations ought to be aware of these four categories.

"For a lawful recitation there are few pre-requisites too. First, the songster, secondly the listener, thirdly, the recitation, and fourthly the musical instruments. The singer should be a grown up man, neither of tender age nor a woman; the listener should hearken with his thoughts fixed on God; the recitation should not deal with a subject ludicrous, frivolous or silly; and finally, no musical instrument like a lute or violin should accompany the recitation."[1]

The Khwāja not only disliked instrumental music but also forbade its use by his disciples. Nor did he accept any excuse if any follower ever indulged in the unauthorised practice. The Khwāja was once informed that a few friars had attended and whirled in an audition employing instrumental music. The Khwāja said, "They did not do well. Whatsoever transgresses the limits of the *Sharīʿah* is unlawful." When the Khwāja was told of the plea taken by the mendicants that in the ecstatic reverie they had so abandoned their selves that they became

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, pp. 491-92

completely oblivious of the musical instruments, he observed: "This is no excuse. This plea can be advanced for indulging in every vice."[1]

The Khwāja once told his disciples: "The use of musical instruments being a means of amusement is strictly prohibited. How could it be lawful when women in a congregational prayer are prohibited even to clap their hands in order to remind the Imām, if he commits a mistake in the recitation of the Qur'ān?"[2]

Ecstatic Transports

The Khwāja often used to say that a single verse was sufficient to move a man with unsullied heart to tears and ecstasy but nothing could exhilarate a spiritless fellow.[3] Whenever a verse praising God was recited before the Khwāja he was enraptured but in a way that nobody could notice it. During these rapturous states only tears used to roll down his cheeks.[4]

Mīr Khurd has quoted a few verses which, on different occasions, sent the Khwāja into ecstatic transports. He says that often a whole poem could not produce that rapturous exaltation which was caused by a single Persian or Hindi verse. Once a grandee, Amīr Qairbek, held a recitational sitting which was attended by several nobles and mystics. The songster sang the verse:

Hard put to toil I am, within my shanty home;
Give not tongue to my tale; let alone.

No sooner than the verse was recited, the Khwāja was carried away by a deep emotion and tears began to roll down his cheeks which set the whole gathering in a melting mood.

Another time, although the Khwāja was indisposed he was

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, pp. 520-21
2. *Ibid.*, p. 522
3. *Ibid.*, p. 522
4. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 514

sent into transport when Hasan Behdī recited the verse :

O without a figure indeed, Saʿadī thou art,
Too poor a catch where the trapped are pure in heart.

The recitation ended, and the Khwāja calmed down. But as soon as Amīr Hajī[1] began another ode of Amīr Khusrū, the Khwāja again dissolved in tears.[2]

Once Amīr Khusrū recited one of his odes whose opening verse was :

He stood unveiled to all, but asked me not to behold ;
Thrilled and lost, I knew not what his words contained.

The Khwāja gave a side-long look at Amīr Khusrū and then broke into tears falling into rapturous ecstasy.[3]

Whichever ode or verse produced the consuming emotion of ecstasy in Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn became instantly popular in Delhi as a household word.[4] It is related that Sultān ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn Khiljī had given instructions to his courtiers to inform him of the verses which caused the Khwāja to fall in raptures. The King derived pleasure whenever these verses were related to him.

Recital of the Qurʾān

The inimitable symphony of the Qurʾān had always been the greatest source of delight to the sheikhs of *Chishtiyah* order who showed keen interest in its memorisation and recital. From Khwāja Moʿīn ud-dīn Chishtī to Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn, every Sheikh bade his disciples to learn, recite and study the holy Scripture.[4]

While vesting Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn with the robe of vicegerency, his mentor had instructed him to commit the Qurʾān to his heart and the Khwāja fulfilled the wish of his teacher at

1. Son of Amīr Khusrū
2. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, p. 515
3. *Ibid.*, p. 516
4. *Ibid.*, 510
5. *Nizām-i-Tʿalīm*, Vol. II, p. 12

the earliest opportunity on reaching Delhi. Likewise, the Khwāja called upon his closer associates and disciples to do the same. When Amīr Hasan ʿAlāʾ Sajazī took the oath of fealty to the Khwāja, he was quite an elderly man, and poetry had remained his favourite pursuit throughout his life. The Khwāja instructed him to let the Qurʾān take precedence over his poetic zeal. Amīr Hasan ʿAlāʾ Sajazī says in *Fawāʾid-ul-Fuwād*: "I have repeatedly heard the Sheikh saying that the recitation of the Qurʾān ought to throw into shade the eagerness to compose poetry."[1]

When Amīr Hasan ʿAlāʾ Sajazī had learnt one third of the Qurʾān by heart, the Khwāja instructed him to memorise the Quranic verses in small portions and continue repeating what he had already learnt.[2]

Khwāja Muhammad had been placed under the tutelage of the Khwāja by his father Badr ud-dīn Is'hāq. The Khwāja got him to learn the Qurʾān by heart. He recited the Qurʾān so sweetly that the Khwāja appointed him to lead the congregational prayers.[3] Khwāja Mūsā, brother of Khwāja Muhammad was also a *hāfiz* as well as a *qārī*. Before the Khwāja began his meals the two brothers used to recite a portion of the Qurʾān by way of Table Prayer (*Duʿā-i-Maiʾdah*).[4] The Khwāja also got his daughter's sons to memorise the Qurʾān and used always to enquire about the progress made by them.[5]

Love for his Spiritual Guide

Every man inclined to be grateful has always a warm and friendly feeling towards his benefactor, but the Khwāja was affectionately devoted to his Sheikh who had guided and groomed him to attain interior illumination and spiritual

1. *Fawāʾid-ul-Fuwād*, p. 249
2. *Ibid.*, p. 93
3. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, p. 200
4. *Ibid.*, p. 99. The prayers before meals is, however, not prescribed by the *Sharīʿah*.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 203

eminence. This devoted attachment always reminded him of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn whenever any verse recited before him hinted at a person dear to one's heart. Once, when Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn was still alive, a songster recited the verse in the presence of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn.

In this manner stroll ye not;
That evil eye one might cast.

The Khwāja says that the verse recalled to his mind the qualities and virtues, excellence and equipose of his Sheikh so vividly that he asked the songster to go on repeating the same verse for some time. Relating this story tearfully on a subsequent occasion, the Khwāja added with a sigh: "But, alas, it was not long after this incident that my Sheikh left this world.[1]

Watchful attention to Religious Observances

No matter how weak, indisposed or tired owing to strenuous exercises the Khwāja was, he was always extremely careful to perform obligatory prayers alongwith the congregation. It has been related in *Siar-ul-Auliā'* that "even when he had crossed his eightieth year he regularly came down from his apartment on the first storey for all the five congregational prayers along with the mendicants and disciples who happened to be present there. In spite of his old age and feeble body he fasted daily and ate very little."[2]

The Khwāja attached great importance to the *Sunnah* and always enjoined upon his companions and disciples to observe the practices of the Prophet with utmost care. Mīr Khurd has recorded the Khwāja's instructions to his disciples wherein he told them: "One should follow the Prophet's *Sunnah* steadfastly and staunchly and should never let go even the practices occasionally followed by the holy Prophet."[3]

1. *Fawā'id-ul-Fawād*, p. 96
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 125
3. *Ibid.*, p. 318

The Khwāja considered it essential for every spiritual guide to be thoroughly well up in Traditions and the juristic laws so that he may neither act nor cause others to act against the practices of the Prophet.[1]

1. *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, p. 147

V

Learning and Spirituality

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn had not only attained the state of exalted spirituality but had also acquired proficiency in religious sciences which he had studiously learnt from some of the eminent doctors of his time. He had studied literature and theology under Mustaufi-ul-Mamālik Maulānā Shams ud-dīn Khwārzamī, Traditions under Maulānā Kamāl ud-dīn Zāhid Muhammad ibn Ahmad Marīkalī and, finally, gone over some books under the guidance of Sheikh Farīd ud-dīn *Ganjshakra.* One of his teachers, Ahmad Marīkalī had received instruction from the author of *Mashāriq-ul-Anwār*, Sheikh Ahmad ibn Muhammad as-Saghānī.

Literary Pursuits

The Khwaja's disposition as well as the guidance of his *Murshid*—the spiritual guide—set him to seek the inner content of the religious observances in order to raise his religious experience to a higher plane of consciousness and purpose; still, he never lost his interest in intellectual and literary pursuits till his last breath. Mīr Khurd has mentioned in *Siar-ul-Auliā'* that Maulānā Rukn ud-dīn made out the copies of *Kashshāf* and *Mufassal* and a few other books for the Khwāja.[1] Both these books were written by the well-known Mu'tazilite doctor

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 217

Mahmūd Jār ullah Zamakhsharī (d. 538 A. H.); the first one being on exegesis and the other on syntax, which speak of the literary interests of the Khwāja. The author of *Siar-ul-Auliā'* also relates that the Khwāja used to listen to the recitation of *Khamsa-i'-Nizāmi* by Saiyid Khāmosh ibn Saiyid Muhammad Kirmānī.[1] The famous Persian poet Amīr Khusrū, known as the 'Sugar Tongued Parrot of India' had the honour of being guided by the Khwāja in his poetic compositions. In the beginning Amīr Khusrū used to submit his poems to the Khwāja for correction and improvement. Once the Khwāja advised him to rhyme his verses in the style of Saphahānīs.[2]

Traditions and Jurisprudence

The speech delivered by the Khwāja in the court of Sultān Ghiyāth ud-dīn Tughlaq on the question of musical recitations illustrates his deep insight and extensive knowledge of the subject under dispute.

The six authoritative books of Traditions, known as *Sihāh-us-Sittah,* had not become prevalent in the northern India prior to Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlavi (d. 1052 A. H.) nor were the doctors of religion then aware of the books comprising even the *Sahīhain*. *Mashāriq-ul-Anwār* and *Mishkāt* alone were then regarded as the two most authoritative dissertations on the subject.[3] Numerous apocryphal and spurious Traditions were then extant and freely used by the mystics and preachers as could be seen from their utterances preserved in the biographical literature of the time. The canons evolved for the acceptance or rejection of the Traditions were also not known to the religious scholars of the country before Muhammad Tahir Patnī (d. 986 A. H.) But the biographies and discourses of the Khwāja bespeak of his profound knowledge of the *Sahīhain* for he never argued on the basis of any disputed or unauthorised

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 219
2. *Ibid.*, 301
3. For details see *Thuqāfat-il-Islāmiyah fil-Hind*

Tradition prevalent amongst the mystics of his time. Once, on being asked whether the saying: "A generous person is a friend of God even if he be an unbeliever" was a Tradition or not, the Khwāja replied: "This is an adage." The enquirer persisted upon saying that he had read it in a book on Traditions but the Khwaja replied: "Whatever is in *Sahīhain* is authentic."[1]

Significance of Knowledge

The acquisition and imparting of knowledge was highly commended by Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn; for, like the precursors of *Chishtiyah* order, he considered it an essential pre-requisite for those whom he commissioned for preaching and guiding the people on the path of spirituality.

An intelligent and capable young man hailing from Bengal, who later shined as Sheikh Sirāj ud-dīn of the *Chishtiyah* monastery of Pandwa, came from Laknauti with the intention of uniting in the bond of spiritual paternity with the Khwāja. After he had taken the oath of fealty, the Khwāja said to Maulānā Fakhr ud-dīn Zarrādī: "This young man seems to be capable but if he could also go in for learning, he would become a competent friar." Maulānā Zarrādī obtained permission to teach the young man for some time and very soon he was able

1 *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, p. 103. It may be mentioned here that the Khwāja was undoubtedly aware of the merit and worth of *Sahīhain* but the two books comprising it being then not included in the curriculum of Indian educational institutions. were generally not studied by the doctors of religion. Some of the Traditions cited by the Khwāja in support of musical recitations during the debate held by Sultān Ghiyāth ud-dīn Tughlak, are not to be found in the *Sahīhain*, nor are they considered of unimpeachable authority by the Traditionists. The speeches of the contending doctors in that debate show even greater ignorance of the science of Traditions. Ignorance of the *Sihāh-us-Sittah* and the canons framed for their evaluation had given rise to many un-Islamic practices in the monasteries of the then mystics of India. This, by the way, testifies to the great service rendered by the Traditionists of India in revivifying the true content of faith in the country.

to create in his disciple the desire for further education. After the Khwāja's death Sirāj ud-dīn continued his studies at Delhi before returning to his home town to diffuse the spiritual mission of the *Chishtiyah* order in Bengal and the eastern provinces.[1]

The Perfect Knowledge

The Khwāja being well schooled in the theological sciences was able to occupy himself fruitfully with contemplations and investigations of true knowledge concealed to all but those illuminated by the Divine grace. This comprehension acquired through intuition and inspiration is known by the mystics as the perfect or intuitive knowledge. The author of *Siar-ul-Auliā'* states that whenever any uncertainty pertaining to any question lingered unresolved, the Khwāja clarified the issue as if through his inner lustre which satisfied every mind. He always gave such a convincing reply that everyone was amazed and had to admit that such a reply could be given only by one endowed with the interior spirit of piety. Numerous scholars of the day and doctors of religion who were known for their opposition to the path of mysticism had ultimately to repent for their vainglory and enlist themselves among the disciples of the Khwāja.[2]

The Path of Sharī'ah

With his erudition coupled with the zeal to follow the way of the Prophet, the Khwāja had developed the sense which guided him to reject all the irreligious practices prevalent among the mystics of his day. The doctrines of the then *sūfīs* departing from the pure faith were never accepted by him howsoever sacrosanct they might have been considered by others.

A misguided belief then commonly held by the *sūfīs* was that *walāyat* or sainthood signified a stage higher than the

1. *Siar-ul-'Ārifīn*, p. 12
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 130

prophethood, for, the former developed a continuous absorption in the contemplation of Divine Essence while the latter required a temporary recession from devoted attraction to God for purposes of preaching and imparting guidance to the mankind. Some of the mystic sects even went a step further to claim that every *walī* or saint was gifted with a higher spiritual merit than a prophet. Khwāja, however, never subscribed to these views and, as recorded by the author of *Fawāiʾd-ul-Fuwād*, he observed: 'This is an irreligious belief.' Even though the prophets had to devote a part of their time to the guidance of humanity, a fraction of their devotion to the Supreme Being carried infinitely greater merit than the life-long absorption of the mystics in the love of God."[1]

Spiritual Development

A misconceived but popular notion about mysticism is that it requires renunciation of the world for it regards every mundane affair a snare and a glitter of the deceptive world which lets fall a veil of ignorance before the eyes of the attracted traveller. But the Khwāja had attained that stage of inward illumination which had lifted him above the external features of the devotional observances of the mystics and opened to his view the real significance of every act lawful in the eyes of the *Sharīʿah*. We are indebted to the collectanea of Khwāja Saiyid Muhammad Gesū Darāz who has quoted the observation of the Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn on the subject: "Nothing (made) lawful

1. *Fawāʾid-ul-Fuwād*, p. 120. Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindī (d. 1034 A. H.) commonly known as Mujaddid Alf-i-Thānī (the Renovator of the Second Millennium) has further elucidated the point that even when the prophets have to turn their attention to the human beings their interior self remains absorbed in the ocean of Divine wisdom more than the saints do during the period of Godly attraction. Explaining the reason for it he says that the prophets direct their attention to the human beings in pursuance of the Divine command to convey His message to the humanity and, therefore, no distinction can be made between it and absorption in the recollection of God.

(by the *Sharīah*) is a hinderance in the way of God nor cuts off the path of an attracted traveller, else it would not have been made permissible by God."[1]

Another time the Khwāja said, "You should be pure of heart and conscious of God in every action. After that you may engage yourself in whatever (lawful) occupation you desire for nothing will then harm you."[2]

Renunciation of the World

A clear and intelligible exposition of the reality of renunciation was made by the Khwāja in these words: "Renunciation does not mean that one should put off his clothes and don a loin-cloth. A man can dress properly and take food and also enjoy what is lawfully available to him but he should never try to store up these; nor should he entangle his heart in anything. This is the correct way of the renunciation of worldly desires."[3]

Kinds of Obedience

"Obedience (to God) is of two kinds," the Khwāja once eexplained, "obligatory and transilient. The obedience falling in the first category consists of those acts which benefit the person complying with a command as, for example, the prayer, fasting, *haj* and recollection of God. Transilient obedience is that which extends the benefit to others such as restoring harmony between the Muslims, showing consideration or benevolence to others. The obedience of the latter category is highly meritorious and shall have limitless reward from God. Absolute sincerity is essential for the acceptance of obligatory obedience but transilient obedience will be recompensed by God howsoever it is rendered."[4]

Miracles Worked by Saints

The miracles worked by the saints were held by the Khwāja

1. *Jawāme-ul-Kalām*, p. 160
2. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, p. 160
3: *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, Vol. I, p. 7
4. *Ibid.*, p. 14

to be resulting from their total absorption and intoxication in the love of God. "They are attracted devotees," says the Khwāja about the saints working miracles, "whereas the prophets have a placid disposition and serene spirit. That is why, unlike the prophets, miracles become an obstacle for the mystics in their journey of spiritual development. On the other hand. the love of God imparts stability to the state of elevation.[1]"

Knowledge of the Prophets

The Khwāja classified knowledge into three grades viz. perceptive, intellectual and divine. We have perceptions through our senses such as the taste of different edibles or the various types of smells. The knowledge in regard to these is obtained through the senses. On the second grade comes the knowledge obtained through intellect. This is also of two kinds, acquired and intuitive. The Khwāja further explained that "even the intuitive knowledge is not divine, what to speak of acquired knowledge. Excepting those for whom the doors of divine knowledge are opened, who can say what its features are? Nobody who gains knowledge through his intellect, either by his own effort or through intuition can find his way to the divine knowledge although he can derive pleasure from his intellectual knowledge." In order to illustrate his point the Khwāja told the story of a certain saint who desired to record the manifestations of reality dawning upon his heart during the moments of ecstatic illuminations. In fact he wrote quite a lot to express his feelings but ultimately confessed that human language could not convey what he wanted to describe.[2]

Love of the World

Once someone said to the Khwāja: "There are some who love the world while there are others who hate it." "There are three types of persons," replied the Khwāja, "some cherish

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1. *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, Vol. I, p. 33
2. *Ibid.*, p. 69

the world so much that they are always crazy about it and their number is quite large. There are others who not only hate the world but hold it in contempt and always sneer at it. There is also a third category, who neither hold it dear not detest it. They neither eulogize the world nor frown upon it and these are better than both the former categories." Thereafter the Khwāja told the story: "Once a man came to Rābiʿah Basrī and started denouncing the world. She replied: "Please do not come again to me. You seem to be so enamoured of the world that you are never tired of talking about it."[1]

Recitation of the Qur'ān

The Khwāja once told about the three ways or grades of reciting the Qur'ān. He said: "The first is that whatever you recite, its pith and substance sinks in your heart. The second grade of its recital is that your heart is awakened to the awe of God while the third grade is that your heart remains attracted to God so long as the recital continues."

"One should always be aware of the fact," the Khwāja continued, "that the recitation of the Book of God confers a blessing undeserved by him. But if that be not possible, one should at least keep in mind the rewards promised for the recital of the holy Scripture."[2]

As the Khwāja has himself acknowledged, he did not leave anything in writing[3] but his greatest productions were his spiritual sons, pure of heart and perfect in knowledge and demeanour, who were examples of rectitude, piety and truthfulness. However, Amīr Ḥasan ʿAlā' Sajazī and Mīr Khurd have narrated numerous sayings and teachings of the Khwāja which bear witness to his deep knowledge and incisive intellect.

1. *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, Vol. I, p. 189
2. *Ibid.*, p. 71
3. *Ibid.*, p. 45 and *Khair-ul-Majālis*, p. 51

VI

Blessings and Benignity

Before we unfold the story of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn's remarkable achievement in enkindling the zeal for moral rectitude and spiritual uplift in countless hearts, specially at a time when the success of the Muslim arms had brought in its train the forgetfulness of God and given a free rein to self-indulgence, let us recapitulate the method evolved by the pure-hearted mystics to rejuvenate the religious vigour of the widespread Muslim population, as explained in the first volume of this book.

After the first few generations "religious seminaries and educational institutions too did not provide any answer to the problem because of the vast population of Muslims and the mundane pre-occupations of the people. The problem of making arrangements for a continued and concerted effort for the education and training of the people in religious tenets and practices, and infusing a breath of new life in the vast numbers spread over far off lands defied solution in the absence of a truly Islamic State. The foremost business or rather the end of the Caliphate was, in the words of Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abdul Azīz, to guide the people in moral rectitude rather than to collect the revenues for the conduct of administration. The then Muslim States were, however, not only indifferent to this fundamental objective but were extremely allergic to any movement or criticism on this score which could pose a threat to their

political supremacy. Thus, these governments being suspicious of all efforts made for the resurgence of Islamic spirit, and, erroneously taking these as movements designed to build up political leadership, lost no time in crushing them.

"In these circumstances there was no way left to revivify the religious spirit and fill the people with an enthusiasm, zeal and self-confidence for reintroduction of the precepts of religion in their daily life. The only alternative left was to call upon the people to take an oath of allegiance for the purpose. Following in the footsteps of the Apostle of God, it had become necessary that a guide of spiritual and moral excellence should obtain an oath, or the *baᶜit,* as it is called, from the people willing to offer sincere penitence and undertaking to lead a virtuous life in future in accordance with the directions of their mentor. If placing oneself under the instruction of an inspired guide meant that he was fairly started upon in his journey to the end of purification of spirit and moral rectitude; the oath of allegiance enjoined a much more onerous responsibility on the mentor himself. The guide or the spiritual teacher had to lead the wandering soul of the disciple taking the *baᶜit,* stage by stage, from cleansing of his spiritual impurities, renouncing the love of worldly temptations and desires, wealth and honour, infusing an spirit of moral uprightness and correct ethical behaviour, following the teachings contained in the Qur'ān and the Traditions, to the illumination of the pupil's soul. This was, in truth, what the *baᶜit* meant and by which the inspired souls tried to infuse into their disciples, through preaching and personal example, loving care and unalloyed sincerity, an inner vitality of spirit and strength of moral integrity. As the experience shows, the reformers and renovators of faith did succeed in revivifying the true faith and tapping new sources of popular strength in their own times, through this tried and infallible method which just copied the procedure and technique followed by the Prophet of Islam. Innumerable persons have been provided with an opportunity of not only adopting a virtuous life through this method but have also been led to attain even the stage of 'Divine

Acquaintance' and 'Love' by the inspired guides and teachers."[1]

Baʿit : A Pledge and a Covenant

The *baʿit* implies a determination to completely turn away from sin and to pattern one's life in accordance with the ordinances of God and His Apostle. None of his biographers has mentioned what the Khwāja required the intending disciples to say or promise while administering the *baʿit* to them but the Khwāja has himself left an account of the manner in which his own Sheikh, Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn used to accept disciples in his spiritual paternity. Since the Khwāja had a deep and enduring affection for his spiritual guide and tried to follow in his footsteps, it can be assumed that he would have also acted similarly on such occasions. Speaking of his Sheikh, the Khwāja says :

> "When anybody came to the Sheikh (Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn) with the intention of taking the *baʿit*, he used to ask him to recite the *Sūratul Fātiha*[2] and *Sūratul Ikhlās*.[3] Then the Sheikh himself recited the last five verses of *Sūratul Baqr*[4] followed by the verse :
>
> "Allah (Himself) is Witness that there is no God save Him. And the angels and the men of learning (too are witness). Maintaining His creation in justice, there is no God save Him, the Almighty, the Wise.
>
> "Lo ! religion with Allah (is) the surrender (to His Will and Guidance)."[5]
>
> "Thereafter he used to tell the disciple : 'You have taken the *baʿit* on the hands of this weakling, on the hands of my Sheikh and his Sheikhs and on the hands of the Prophet, on whom be peace and blessings. And now you swear an oath to God Almighty that you would guard your

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1. Saviours of Islamic Spirit, Vol. I, pp. 197-98
2. First chapter of the Qurʾān
3. Hundred twelfth chapter of the Qurʾān
4. Second chapter of the Qurʾān
5. Q. III : 18-19

hands, feet and eyes from the ways of sin and betake the path of *Sharī'ah* and the way (of life) chalked out by it."[1]

Wide Circle of Disciples

The Khwāja permitted everyone desiring to take the *ba'it*, to enter the circle of his disciples without putting him to any test or trial. The *ba'it* being a pledge and a covenant to follow in the steps of one's spiritual guide for the rest of one's life, a question might arise as to why the Khwāja administered the *ba'it* so easily to everyone. The Khwāja has himself given an answer to this question.

The well-known historian and author of *Tarīkh Fīroz Shāhī*, Ziā' ud-dīn Barnī, says that once he happened to remain with the Khwāja from early morning till a little before noon. During this period quite a good number of people took the *ba'it* on the hands of the Khwāja. It occurred to his mind that the earlier mystics used to be very cautious in taking disciples but the Khwāja perhaps allowed everybody to take the *ba'it* out of his generosity and largeheartedness. He says that he thought of asking the reason for it from the Khwāja but his doubt was revealed to the Khwāja by divine grace who atonce asked: "Maulānā Ziā' ud-dīn, you ask all sorts of questions but you have never asked me why I accept everybody as my disciple?" Taken aback, Ziā' ud-dīn touched the feet of the Khwāja and said that the doubt had struck his mind on several occasions and a few moments before he had thought of asking about it but God had revealed his secret to him. Thereupon the Khwāja replied:

> "Divine wisdom endows every age with a singularity with the result that the characteristics, habits and manners of the people in every age, barring, of course, a few persons, differ from their predecessors. This is a matter of experience. The purpose behind the *ba'it* is that a disciple expels from his heart everything except God and gets

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, p. 224

absorbed in the vastness of Divine presence as you find it explained in the books on mysticism. The mystics of the old never accepted anybody under their spiritual paternity unless they were satisfied that the intending disciple had cleansed his heart of all earthly objects and desires. But Sheikh Saif ud-dīn Bākharzī, Sheikh Abū Sa^ceed Abul Khair, Sheikh Shahāb ud-dīn Suharwardī and Sheikh Farīd ud-dīn accepted everyone desirous of spiritual purification under their surveillance. I do not lay a claim to the same spiritual excellence as those elevated souls had attained, but, I would like to explain why I do not take the same precaution as the earlier Sheikhs used to take. One of the reasons is that I have been informed by a large number of persons that good many of my disciples completely turn a new leaf, abstain from sins and begin offering prayers regularly. Some even devote considerable time in recollection of God. Now, if I were to make sure that they have completely disentangled their hearts from the worldly desires before I administer *ba^cit* to them, they would be deprived of whatever spiritual uplift they attain through it. The other reason is that my Sheikh permitted me to take disciples without my asking for it or even entertaining a desire for the same. When I see a Muslim coming to me with bated breath, in all humility and submission to make repentance for his sins, I accept his statement and administer him the *ba^cit*; for, I am told that many of them really abjure their evil practices after taking the oath of fealty."[1]

Reformative Endeavour

What was the effect of the discipleship of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn, so generously extended to all, the nobles and the commoners, the officials and the traders, on the social and moral life of the people? Delhi was then the flourishing capital

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, pp. 346-48 ; *Hasrat Nāmah*, p. 13

of a powerful empire whose pomp and pageantry had attracted all the means of amusement that wealth and power could purchase to divert the attention of the people from the path of piety and fear of God. The celebrated historian of that age, Ziā' ud-dīn Barnī, relates how the Khwāja was able to awaken deep religious longing to find God in every heart which guided the people to betake the path of virtue. He says:

"The three luminaries of the mystic order during the time of ʿAlā' ud-dīn Khiljī were Sheikh-ul-Islam Nizām ud-dīn, Sheikh-ul-Islam ʿAlā' ud-dīn and Sheikh-ul-Islam Rukn ud-dīn. A vast multitude had pledged devotion to these spiritual guides. Countless people repented from their sins and turned from evil, took to prayers and devotional exercises, expelled worldly desires, covetousness and greed from their hearts and inculcated a deep religious yearning for the fellowship of God. The example set by these spiritual preceptors through their spirit of humanity, virtuous living and upright behaviour charged the atmosphere with a genuine religious spirit which helped the people to become truthful and genuinely religious. The piety and righteoutness of these God-moved souls attracted divine blessings; natural calamities like famines and pestilence ceased to visit the land, and, the Mongols, who were the scourge of the world, were brought to a shameful ruin. All these blessings, to which every man in the days of these three saints would bear witness, became a means for the ascendancy of Islam. The rules of the *Sharīʿah* as well as the doctrine of the mystics gained popularity among the people. How blessed were the last ten years of Sultān ʿAlā' ud-dīn's reign when he had prohibited the use of all intoxicants and the ways of immorality and sensual gratification! ...On the other side, Sheikh-ul-Islam Nizām ud-dīn had opened wide the gates of spiritual preceptorship; encouraged the sinners to repent for their sins; and allowed all, the rich and the poor, the king and the slave, the learned and the illiterate to cleanse their souls through his

spiritual guidance. Everyone who pledged allegiance to the Sheikh considered himself spiritually attached to him and gave up many of his vices. If anybody ever committed a sin, the Sheikh allowed him to offer penitence and renew his *ba'it*. Thus, all those who took the pledge to walk along the pathway of purity were saved from many vices and were gradually led, through emulation of the Sheikh, to prayers and litanies. Every man and woman, whether tender in years or bent with age, regularly offered obligatory prayers and vied with each other in the performance of voluntary devotions. From the city to Ghiyāthpur, people had made arrangements for the wayfarers to take rest and offer their prayers. Machinations of the devil were eschewed by the people who took more interest in ascertaining the number of *rak'ats* performed on different occasions and the chapters of the Qur'ān recited in them by their spiritual mentors. Numerous people had enthusiastically taken to memorise the Qur'ān. A favourite pastime of the Sheikh's disciples was to instruct each other in the ways of mystic thought and practice and to relate the stories of those who had taken to a life of propinquity with God. They never talked of the earthly desires nor longed for power and pelf. Many among the attendants and servants, chiefs and grandees of the King who had been united in the bonds of spiritual paternity with the Sheikh, performed voluntary prayers and kept superarogatory fasts. There was not a city block or ward in which people did not hold regular gatherings for the remembrance of God, devotional practices or auditions. A number of the Sheikh's disciples recited the entire Qur'ān during the *trāwih* and kept vigil in the mosques during Ramadhan or even on Friday nights or on the occasion of other festivals. Many of them spent two-thirds of their nights in the nocturnal prayers of *tahajjud* all round the year and some even performed the morning prayer with the ablution they had had for the orison of *'ishā'*. I know of a few disciples

of the Sheikh who had been blessed with miraculous powers under the spiritual guidance of the Sheikh......Sultān ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn and his household members were devoted to the Sheikh. The nobles as well as the commoners had taken to righteous, ways. Transgression of the law like immorality, gambling, drunkenness and other vices were unheard of during the last few years of ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn's rule. People had begun to equate heinous sins with apostasy. No Muslim dared to charge interest or indulge in hoarding. The traders had given up the habit of bargaining, short-weighing and adulteration. Most of the students and disciples and numerous other people who kept company with the Sheikh had grown fond of studying mystical tracts like *Qoot-ul-Qulūb*, *Ihyāʾ-ul-Uloom*, *ʿAwārif*, *Kashf-ul-Mahjūb*, *Sharah Tʿarruf*, *Risālah Qushirī*, *Mirsād ul-ʿAbād*, *Maktūbāt-i-ʿAin-ul-Qadhāt*, *Fawāiʾd-ul-Fuwād* and *Lawaih wa Lawameh* which were in great demand in those days. Most of the people sought mystical treatises from the book-sellers. In fine, God had made Sheikh-ul-Islam Nizām ud-dīn a pure-hearted soul like Sheikh Junaid and Sheikh Bā-Yazīd of the bygone ages."[1]

The Love Mart

It was the time when the potent influence exerted by the Khwāja had brought a healthy change in the life of the people in every walk of life including even the inmates of the Imperial Palace of Thousand Pillars. Vanity and self-conceit, mental-disquietude and depression of spirits, the end-products of free living and self-indulgence had given place to the fervour of love-divine; the whole atmosphere seemed to be surcharged with the spiritual love which arises from the harmony of souls.

Mīr Khurd relates in *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*: "Those were the days when everyone soaring to the higher domains of spirituality was drawn towards the tilting notes, harmonious melodies,

1. *Tārīkh Fīroz Shāhī*, pp 46 and 341

love-exciting tales and verses. Sincerity, humility, kindness and solace were the winsome qualities of the Sheikhs which made everyone bow his head in reverence to them."[1]

Training of the Disciples

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn had taken special care to train his disciples who were to diffuse the yearning of eternal love far and wide. Through prayers and litanies, education and edification he guided his spiritual successors on the path of his mystic order. For those who possessed the capability but were not learned he arranged for their education, reproved those who were keen on debates and polemical disputations and prompted others who preferred penance and prayers to enter collective life and bear with equanimity the high-handedness and oppression of the people. He paid particular attention to each one of his disciples to prepare him for the great task of spreading piety and spiritual gifts and moral reformation of the people. He spared no pains nor allowed any obstacle to stand in the way of the mental and spiritual development of his disciples.

It has been stated in the *Siar-ul-Auliā*ʾ that once "a few of his disciples, belonging to Oudh, decided to make a joint request to the Khwāja to permit them to have a debate on certain religious or juristic issues. These disciples being scholars, perhaps, wanted a little respite from the continuous prayers and remembrance prescribed by the Khwāja for them. Maulānā Jalāl ud-dīn was their spokesman, but when they arrived in the presence of the Khwāja, the reflection of Divine grace radiating from his countenance, made everyone dumbfounded. At last Maulānā Jalāl ud-dīn gathered his courage and asked whether they could occasionally devote a little time in debates among them. The Khwāja replied, "What should I say? I have to take another work from you!"[2]

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā*ʾ, p. 510
2. *Ibid.*, p. 306

Saiyid Nasīr ud-dīn Mahmūd, who was later to become the spiritual successor of the Khwāja and whose fame travelled to the four corners of the country as *Chiragh-i-Dehli* (the Lamp of Delhi), intensely desired to lead the life of a recluse in a far off hill or wilderness. He communicated his wish to the Khwāja through Amīr Khusrū but got the reply: "Tell him that he has to live among the people and to bear the insolence and ill-behaviour of the people and to requite it with generosity and sacrifice."[1]

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn was followed by a long line of eminent *sufi* successors who acquired great reputation for piety and spread the *Chishtiyah* fraternity all over the country. After Nasīr ud-dīn Mahmūd *Chiragh-i-Dehli* who, like his spiritual mentor, kept his banner aloft and continued to exert a potent influence over the capital for 32 years, one of his disciples, Saiyid Muhammad Gesū Darāz (d. 825) established himself at Gulbarga in Deccan. His other noted disciples were Kamāl ud-dīn ʿAllāmah, Sheikh Abul Muqtadir Kindī, Sheikh Ahmad Thānesrī, Sheikh Jalāl ud-dīn Husain, also known as *Makhdūm Jahānian Jahān Gasht*, who became great leaders of the *Chishtiyah* order. They all contributed to the revival of Islam in India and infused spiritual fervour among the people. They easily won the favour of the multitudes, while a number of their spiritual successors became influential guides of the sovereigns, not only in spiritual but in political affairs as well.

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, p. 237

VII

Religious and Moral Revival

In the moral-spiritual guidance of his disciples, the Khwāja was always cautious, discreet and watchful. One of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn's disciples, Muʿīd ud-dīn held a responsible post in the court of Sultān ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn Khiljī. Soon After pledging devotion to the Khwāja, Muʿīd ud-dīn resigned his office and became an inmate of the Khwāja's monastery. An able and competent officer that Muʿīd ud-dīn was, Sultān ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn keenly felt his absence and conveyed his displeasure to the Khwāja through one of his courtiers. "It seems that the Sheikh wants to make everybody like him," said the King. The Khwāja sent the reply, "Not like me, but better than myself."[1]

The Khwāja not only guided his disciples to advance on the path of spirituality through prayers, litanies and meditations but also infused in them an ardent zeal for preaching and upholding righteousness with amazing perseverance. The spiritual preceptorship of the Khwāja made his disciples so bold that they could daringly and unhesitatingly put forward what they considered to be right before the kings and despotic rulers. Of a truth, a man of God can never be intimidated, cowed or discouraged, for, timidity is born out of a desire to avoid or escape a material detriment or disadvantage. But a man who has already expelled all worldly desires and longings also casts off

1. *Siar-ul-Auliāʾ*, p. 311

the emotion excited by a threat to his person or belongings. The mystical yearning for ecstatic illumination or the strivings to attain that perfect knowledge of God which is known by the name of *Tawhīd* or Unity of Godhead invariably leads to the explusion of fear—fear of everything except God. To a man attaining that stage the demonstration of wealth and power and the grand and stately ceremonials of royalty begin to appear to be no more than the child's play. Nothing in the world can then deter such a man from speaking out the truth in the face of haughty and despotic emperors.

Fearlessness

Every student of history is aware of the unboumded pride and pomp of Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq. Once the Sultān happened to camp near Hānsī. Mukhlisul Mulk Nizām ud-dīn Nazarbarī was deputed by Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq for inspection of the fort at Hānsī. When this man, known for his heartless cruelty, happened to pass by the house of Sheikh Qutb ud-dīn Munawwar, one of the Khwāja's disciples and spiritual successors, he expressed surprise that the Sheikh had not come to pay his respect to the King. On returning from his errand he brought the matter to the notice of the King. The Sultān, enraged by the report, ordered Hasan Sar Barahna, another man of despotic character, to produce the Sheikh before him Hasan communicated the royal summons to the Sheikh and also told him in reply to a query made by the Sheikh, that he had no choice but to take the Sheikh with him. The Sheikh thanked God that he had not to seek the audience of the King of his own accord. Then, committing the members of his household to the care of God, he set on foot with Hasan with his staff in his hand and the prayer mat on his shoulder. Hasan offered a carriage but the Sheikh preferred to walk on foot. When he reached the camp of the King, he was ordered to proceed to Delhi. On entering the royal court at Delhi, he found the grandees and the chiefs, attendants and guards arrayed to the right and left of the imperial throne. The Sheikh was accompanied by his son

Nūr ud-dīn who got overawed by the pomp and pageantry of the royal court. The Sheikh atonce said loudly to his son: "Baba Nūr ud-dīn, Greatness and Might belongeth to God alone." Nūr ud-dīn later told that as soon as he heard those words, his fright disappeared and he felt that the King and his courtiers were as meek as goats. When the King saw the Sheikh approaching him, he feigned occupation in archery but as the Sheikh got near him, he got up to shake hands with him. The Sheikh firmly gripped his hand without exhibiting the least traces of fear. The King said: "I went to your neighbourhood, but you did not come to guide me on the path of righteousness nor did you honour me by your visit."

"A recluse that I am," replied the Sheikh, "I do not consider myself worthy of meeting the Kings. Betaking myself to a corner of your kingdom I spend my days in praying God for the welfare of the King and the Muslims. I need to be exempted from all formalities."

Pleased with the reply given by the Sheikh, the King asked his brother Fīroz Shāh to do whatever the Sheikh liked. The Sheikh preferred to return to Hānsī and was allowed to do so. Later on, the King told his courtiers that he had met many divines but none had dared to shake hands with him so firmly as did Sheikh Qutb ud-dīn Munawwar. "He gripped my hand so firmly as if he had no speck of fear in his heart," observed Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq.

Before Sheikh Qutb ud-dīn Munawwar left Delhi the King sent Fīroz Shāh and Zia' ud-dīn Barnī with a purse of one lakh Tankās.[1] The Sheikh refused to accept the present saying that two seers of rice and a *dāng*[2] of *ghee*[3] would be enough for a mendicant like him. The King then ordered to let him have fifty thousand Tankās. The Sheikh refused that too. Ultimately the amount was brought down to two thousand Tankās, but

1. Tanka, derived from Turkish vocabulary meant 'White' and was the silver coin of those days.
2. A unit of weight
3. Clarified butter

when the Sheikh again refused the present, Fīroz Shāh and Ziā' ud-dīn Barnī prevailed upon the Sheikh to accept the present lest the King should again get annoyed and put him to harm. Thereupon the Sheikh accepted the amount but distributed it to the poor and needy before leaving Delhi.[1]

At the time Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq decided to transfer the inhabitants of Delhi to Devagiri, he had also conceived the idea of capturing Turkistān and Khurasān to exterminate the progeny of Chenghīz Khān. He had ordered that all the eminent doctors of religion should be invited to deliver sermons in order to arouse the people for taking part in his projected holy war. In this connection a few of the Khwāja's eminent disciples, such as Maulānā Fakhr ud-dīn Zarrādī, Maulānā Shams ud-dīn Yahyā and Sheikh Nasīr ud-dīn Mahmūd were also asked to appear before the King. Maulānā Fakhr ud-din Zarrādī was first brought before the Sultān although he very much detested to see the King and often used to remark that he saw his head rolling on the ground in the royal court. What he meant was that he would in any case speak out the truth and the King would have him beheaded. However, when Maulānā Fakhr ud-dīn entered the royal court, one of the King's secretaries and a disciple of the Maulānā, Qutb ud-dīn Dabīr took up his shoes and stood behind him like a servant.

The King said: "I propose to wipe out the progeny of Chenghīz Khān from the surface of the earth. Would you help me in accomplishing this task?

"*Inshā Allah*" (if God so wills), replied the Maulānā.

"But your reply bespeaks of your doubt." retorted the King.

"This is what one should say about the future," the Maulānā replied calmly.

"Alright, tender me your advice" the King said again angrily.

"Subdue your anger," was the reply given by Maulānā

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā*, pp. 253-55

Zarrādī.

Still more enraged, the King asked, "Which anger?"

"Anger that behoves wild beasts," promptly replied the Maulānā.

The towering fury that swept away the King was now visible from his face, but he kept quiet. After a short while he ordered the servants to bring food. The King invited Maulānā Zarrādī to take food with him. The two shared their meals from the same dish. The king presented pieces of meat with his own hands but the Maulānā took very little of it as if he did not like to have food with the King. Before giving a send off to the Maulānā, the King presented a robe of honour and a purse to him. But before Maulānā Zarrādī could refuse these, Qutb ud-dīn Dabīr stepped ahead and took the presents from the King on behalf of the Maulānā. After the Maulānā had departed, the King called for Qutb ud-dīn Dabīr and said: "What a treacherous man you are! First you took up his shoes and then the presents. You thus saved him from my sword but exposed yourself to danger." Qutb ud-dīn Dabīr replied, "Maulānā Fakhr ud-dīn Zarrādī is my teacher and the successor of my spiritual mentor. I ought to have carried his shoes on my head rather than in the armpit; what to speak of the presents you made to him!" The King threatened to have him put to sword. Later on whenever the name of Maulānā Fakhr ud-dīn Zarrādī was mentioned to the King, he used to remark: "Alas, he escaped from my sword."[1]

Guidance of Administration

The precursors of the *Chishtiyah* order had, from the very beginning, kept themselves aloof from the ruling elite but they were never unmindful of providing necessary guidance to them. Whenever they were called upon to tender their advice or whenever they got an opportunity to exercise their influence over the rulers, they always tried to show them the path of compassion

1. *Siar-ul-Auliā'*, pp. 271-73

and humanitarianism. Many among the kings of India and the governors of provinces held these spiritual guides in the highest regard or were often united with them by oath of fealty with the result that they pursued, under the benign guidance of their Sheikhs, policies designed to mitigate the sufferings of their subjects, enforced justice and acted on the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah*.

Only a few rulers of India could compare with a king so just, mild, kind-hearted and respectful of the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* as Sultān Fīroz Shāh Tughlaq. Shams-i-Sirāj 'Afīf and Zia' ud-dīn Barnī speak of the achievements of this good natured Sultān. The author of *Tārikh-i-Firishta*, Abul Qāsim Hindu Shāh, writes: "He was a learned, just, gracious and softhearted ruler. His subjects as well the armed forces, were well-pleased with him. During the reign of this sovereign no tyrant could oppress the weak."[1]

This noted historian has enumerated three characteristics of his rule unmatched by that of other rulers of the age. Fīroz Shāh never had to take recourse to the methods of chastisement for his benevolence and generosity left no room for it. The land revenue was fixed by him according to the paying capacity of the people and all the tithes and taxes unjustly imposed by the former rulers were abolished. He never encouraged anyone to make false reports to him about his subjects. And, lastly, he appointed God-fearing and sympathetic governors to administer the provinces who emulated the King in their kind treatment of the people.[2]

But only a few persons are aware of the fact that Sultān Fīroz Shāh owed his accession to the throne to Khwāja Nasīr ud-dīn Mahmūd *Chiragh-i-Dehlī*.[3]

Shams-i-Sirāj 'Afif graphically relates how Fīroz Shāh ascended she throne. He says: "Sheikh Nasīr ud-dīn accompanied

1. *Tārīkh Firishta*, Vol. I, p. 278
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 271
3. *Ibid.*, p. 259

Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq when he went to suppress the revolt in Thatha. The Sultān died[1] and Fīroz Shāh called a meeting of the nobles and courtiers. Sheikh Nasīr ud-dīn, however, sent the word to Fīroz Shāh whether he would dispense justice to the people or he should pray God for another ruler for them? Fīroz Shāh sent back the reply: 'I shall be just and kind to the creatures of God.' Thereupon the Sheikh replied: 'If you would do what you promise, then I would request God Almighty to grant you forty years.' And the Sultān really ruled for forty years."[2]

Sultān Muhammad Shāh Bahmanī (759-776 A.H.) was acknowledged as the ruler after the death of his father ʿAlāʾ ud-dīn Bahman Shāh[3] by all the mystic Sheikhs of Deccan who took oath of allegiance to him but Sheikh Zain-ud-dīn (d. 801 A.H.) refused to take the oath on the ground that the King was a drunkard and indulged in acts declared unlawful by the *Sharīʿah*.

In 767 A.H., when the Sultan came to Daulatabad, he demanded that Sheikh Zain ud-dīn should either personally call upon him or acknowledge his suzerainty in writing. The reply given by the Sheikh was: "Once a religious scholar, a Saiyid and an eunuch happened to fall in the hands of certain heathens who offered to spare their lives only if they prostrated before their idols. The scholar prostrated before the idol acting on the permission given by the *Sharīʿah* to save one's life in such circumstances. The Saiyid too followed suit but the eunuch said that since he had spent his whole life in transgressing the commandments of God and had no hope of salvation like the scholar or the Saiyid, it would be better for him to give his life in the way of God. Thus he preferred death to prostration before idols. I am also pretty much like that eunuch; I shall

1. Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq died on 21st Muharram 752 A. H. (Sunday, 20th March 1351 A. D.).
2. Shams-i-Sirāj Afif, p. 28
3. *Firishta* reports that he died in Rabiʿul-Awwal, 759 but according to *Tārīkh- ul-Mulūk* Bahman died in 761 A. H.

bear every hardship but would neither call upon you nor take the oath of allegiance." The Sultān got enraged and ordered the Sheikh to leave the city atonce. Sheikh Zain ud-dīn took only his prayer mat and set out to the shrine of his spiritual guide Sheikh Burhān ud-dīn. He sat down there and told the emissaries of the King that nobody could move him from that place. Failing in his effort, the King sent a message to the Sheikh through one of his ministers which said: "I am thine, be thou mine."

Sheikh Zain ud-dīn replied: "If the Sultān Ghāzī upholds the laws of the *Sharīᶜah*, closes down all wine shops throughout his dominion, gives up drinking and follows in the footsteps of his father in charging the Qāzīs, *ᶜUlamā* and the governors to ensure that the path of righteousness is betaken and the ways of sin forbidden, then he shall not find anybody a better friend and well-wisher than me." The two couplets Sheikh Zain ud-dīn wrote concluding his letter to the King were:

So long as the chain of breath keeps us living;
Nothing shall we do but chaste as morning.
For those who cast on us a glance belighting;
From us a world of good shall they ever be getting.

The Sultān was so pleased to find himself addressed as Ghāzī by the Sheikh that he issued an edict that henceforth it should form part of his royal title. Thereafter Sultān Muhammad Shāh Bahmanī immediately returned to Gulbarga, proclaimed the ban on sale of liquor, enforced *Sharīᶜah* as the law of the land and made energetic efforts to root out theft, burglary and robbery. The Sultān took about six months in completing his reforms but, in the meantime, he kept corresponding with Sheikh Zain ud-dīn and seeking his advice about the conduct of his administrative policy.[1]

In other parts of the country, too, where the Sheikhs of *Chishtiyah* order had set up their monasteries, they continued to guide the rulers to keep them on the straight and even path

1. *Tarīkh Firishta*, Vol. I, pp. 560-62

chalked out by the *Sharīʿah*. The famous *Chishtiyah* monastery of Pandwah in Bengal was a source of strength for the Muslim Kingdom in that part of the country. Professor Khalīq Ahmad Nizāmī has related, in *Tārīkh Mashaʾikh-i-Chist*, how the saints of *Chishtiyah* order helped to re-establish Muslim rule in Bengal.[1] "Nūr Qutb-i-ʿĀlam was" writes Pro. Nizāmī, "the son of Sheikh ʿAlāʾ-ul-Haq. During the period he was holding charge of the monastery, Bengal was passing through a political crisis. Raja Kans, a local Zamindar belonging to Bhitoriah in Rajshahi district, usurped the throne of the Raja, a vassal of Delhi, and tried to drive away imperial forces. Nūr Qutb-i-ʿĀlam established contact with Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqī, as well as made efforts through Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Samnānī to persuade the Sultān to invade Bengal. The collection of letters written by Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Samnānī giving the details of the then political situation obtaining in Bengal are particularly instructive. The letter written by Saiyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Samnānī in reply to the communication sent by Nūr Qutb-i-ʿĀlam sheds considerable light upon the efforts made by the *sufī* saints of Bengal."[2]

Here we have given but a few examples to illustrate the path of mysticism trodden by the saints of *Chishtiyah* order which did not mean merely a withdrawal from the world for penance and prayer and purification of their souls but also burdened them with the duty of diffusing righteousness, speaking out the truth in the face of autocraft and tyrant rulers, putting their lives at stake to check grossness and, above all, keeping the masses as well as the ruling elite on the right path.

The Preaching of Islam

From the very first day the *sufī sheikhs* of *Chistiyah* order entered India they remained itinerant preachers of Islam. The

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1. For fuller details see *Riyāz-us-Salātīn* (*Tārīkh Bengālah*) by Ghulām Husain Salīm.
2. *Tārīkh Mashaʾikh-i-Chisht*, pp. 201-202

accessions to Islam through Khwāja Mo^cīn ud-dīn Chishtī were quite numerous. Just how much was the success achieved by him can never be measured in the absence of records kept by his contemporaries. It is, however, an established fact that the spread of Islam in India was the fruit of the Khwāja's piety and religious zeal. A large number of people were attracted and inspired by the spiritual power and divinely endowed popularity enjoyed by the Khwāja. India has always had quite a number of wandering mendicants who had developed occult powers with the help of *yoga*. Not unoften these *sufī* saints were challenged by the wonder-working *yogis* who soon discovered that the superior spiritual powers and the undoubted piety of the *Chishti* mystics was something quite different from the magical feats performed by them. The *Chishti sheikhs* also won the confidence of the masses because of their pious and frugal living, simple and straightforward religious and social precepts, love of suffering humanity, selfless service and disregard of the barriers of caste and creed and high and low which had been for centuries the blight of an oppressive caste-ridden social order in the country. The biographies and memoirs of the mystics mention numerous incidents of confrontation between the *yogis* and *sufī* saints. These cannot be substantiated by the records of historians of the kings and emperors but the prevailing taste for wonder-working and credulous mind of the then India and the convergence of spiritually elevated souls in Ajmer during the times of Khwāja Mo^cīn ud-dīn Chishtī leave little doubt about the veracity of the stories told in the tracts of the mystics. But, in truth and reality, it was not the spiritual power alone possessed by the Khwāja that won conspicuous success but his purity of heart, grandeur of holiness and simple way of life which were something new for the inhabitants of India.

Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn *Ganjshakar* occupies an eminent place among the spiritual successors of Khwāja ^cMoīn ud-dīn because of his excessive zeal to spread the message of Islam in the country. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliā' says that "people

belonging to every caste and creed, mendicants and non-mendicants flocked to listen to his sermons."

Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn possessed such a hypnotic spiritual influence that the claim made about his causing a considerable number of non-Muslims to turn to Islam does not seem to be at all exaggerated. A number of Muslim clans and families settled in the Punjab, specially around Pakpattan, still trace the conversion of their ancestors to the efforts of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn. Thomas Arnold writes in 'The Preaching of Islam' that "the conversion of the inhabitants of the western plains of the Punjab is said to have been affected through the preaching of Bahā al-Haqq of Multān[2] and Baba Farīd al-Dīn of Pakpattan, who flourished about the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries. A biographer of the latter saint gives a list of sixteen tribes who were won over to Islam through his preaching, but unfortunately provides us with no details of this work of conversion."[3]

Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn was a zealous preacher of Islam but he also held the view that mere preaching was not enough to win over anyone from his ancestral religion, particularly when it was doubly guarded by caste taboos and age-old social customs. In his opinion it was necessary that one should be afforded the opportunity of intimate acquaintanceship and fellowship for a considerable period for winning him over to a new faith.

There is little doubt that the Khwāja, during his spiritual preceptorship of about half a century in the capital of the empire, which was visited by innumerable persons on errands of commerce and administrative business, and very many of whom, both Muslims and non-Muslims, would have deemed it a privilege to pay their respect to the renowned saint, must have succeeded in winning over a large number of converts to his faith. To the south of Ghiyāthpur lies the district of Mewāt

1. *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, p. 5
2. Otherwise known as Sheikh Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyya
3. The Preaching of Islam, p. 281

whose contumacious people always harassed the inhabitants of Delhi and invited chastisement by Ghiyāth ud-dīn Balban. Although it is difficult to obtain accurate information but the successful penetration of Islam in a greater part of this area was made possible by the potent influence exerted by Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn.

The moral excellence and godliness and the spirit of humanity and fraternity exhibited by these Chishtī missionaries must have inspired the population around their monasteries as a revelation from on High. To the credulous minds looking forward to performance of miracles as a proof of spiritual power, the developed spirituality and miraculous deeds of the mystics must have certainly been a source of attraction and opened their way for entering the new faith. All these causes explain the conversion of large numbers around the monasteries of Pandwah in Bengal and those in Ahmadabad and Gulbargah in the south. Shāh Kalīm ullah, an eminent Chishti preceptor of the eleventh century was ever vigilant, as his letters to his spiritual vicegerent Sheikh Nizām ud-dīn of Aurangabad[1] show, about the missionary work of his disciples. In a letter to Sheikh Nizām ud-dīn his spiritual mentor asked him to "try to widen the sphere of Islam by winning over people to it."[2] In another letter Shāh Kalīm ullah exhorted him to continue his endeavour "to spread the word of God and to shed the light of truth from east to west."[3] Prof. Khalīq Ahmad Nizāmi writes that efforts made by Sheikh Nizām ud-dīn brought a large number of non-Muslims within the fold of Islam. Although a few of them did not declare their conversion for the fear of their relatives, they had embraced the faith in all sincerity.[4]

Unfortunately no careful records of the individualistic missionary activities of *Chishti* sheikhs could be kept but almost

1 He belonged to Oudh, his birth-place being village Nagram in Lucknow district.

2. *Maktūbāt-i-Kalīmī,* letter No. 76, p. 60

3. *Ibid*, No. 80. p. 62

4. *Tārikh Mashā'ikh-i-Chisht,* p. 303

all the historians are unanimous on the point that these men of God endowed with piety and religious zeal had, through their own personal interest in the spread of Islam, and inspired with a divine call, succeeded in converting a large number of Indians to the faith of the Prophet. There is also little doubt that this great display of missionary zeal was the handiwork of the early precursors of the *Chishtiyah* order in India.

Educational Endeavours

The importance accorded to the acquisition of knowledge by Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn and his other disciples is illustrated by the interest shown by Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn in the edification of his spiritual vicegerants. Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliā' as well as Sheikh Sirāj ud-dīn ʿUthmān of Oudh, the founder of the famous Chishtī monastery of Pandwah, never conferred the habit of spiritual successorship on any disciple until he had attained the requisite educational standard. The result of it was that the edification of soul was accompanied by the cultivation of mind and this process continued till the *Chishtiyah* order itself showed signs of decline. An eminent disciple of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn was Maulānā Shams ud-dīn Yahyā who was an accomplished scholar of his time. In a couplet Sheikh Nasīr ud-dīn *Chirāgh-i-Dehli* says:

"Who gave thee life eternal, I enquired from learning;
"Shams ud-dīn Yahyā, she came out hastening."

Among the disciples of Sheikh Nasīr ud-dīn *Chiragh-i-Delhi*, Qāzī ʿAbdul Muqtadir Kindī (d. 791) was an erudite scholar who left such renowned men of learning as Maulānā Khwājgi of Delhi (809 A.H.) and Sheikh Ahmad of Thaneswar (d. 820 A.H.) and Sheikh Shahāb ud-dīn Ahmad ibn ʿUmar of Daulatābād (d. 849 A.H.), author of *Sharah Kāfiyah*, who occupies a eminent place among the scholars of medieval India. The last mentioned was a student of both Maulānā Khwājgi and Qāzī ʿAbdul Muqtadir Kindī. Commentaries of *Sharah Kāfiyah* were later written by such renowned scholars as ʿAllāma Gazrunı and Mīr Ghiyāth ud-dīn Mansūr Shirāzī. When Sheikh Shahāb

ud-dīn fell seriously ill, Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqī took a cup of water as a token of sacrifice and prayed thus to God : "My Lord, this prince of scholars is the pride of my kingdom. If Thou has ordained him to die, accept my life in his behalf."

Another distinguished man of learning belonging to the *Chishtiyah* order was Maulānā Jamāl-ul-Auliā' *Chishtī* of Korah (d. 1047 A.H.) Amongst his students the most noted for their learning were Maulānā Lutf ullah of Korah, Saiyid Muhammad Tirmizī of Kalpi, Sheikh Muhammad Rashīd of Jaunpur and Sheikh Yāsīn of Banaras. Maulānā Lutf ullah was succeeded by such illustrious scholars as Maulānā Ahmad of Amethī (also known as Mulla Jeewan), Qāzī ʿAlīm ullah and Maulana ʿAli Asghar of Kannauj. The educational seminary of the Tīla Masjid in Lucknow, once famous throughout India, was headed by Shāh Pīr Muhammad (d. 1085 A.H.) who was also spiritually united to the *Chishtiyah* order. Similarly, the originator of *Nizāmiyah* curriculum enjoying worldwide fame was Mullā Nizām ud-dīn of Firangī Mahal (d. 1161 A.H.) whose followers and descendants belonged to the *Chishtiyah* fraternity. These *Chishti* scholars, of whom many were of such merit and stature as to be regarded men of outstanding merit among the scholars of their time, strengthened the traditions of deep learning and caused it to spread far and wide within the country. The chroniclers of India have acknowledged the valuable contribution made to the cause of education by the *Chishtīyah* monastaries of Pandwah, Gulbarga, Manikpur, Saloan and other places which also find a mention in the letters written to their contemporaries by Nūr Qutb -i-ʿĀlam, Jahāngīr Ashraf Samnānī and Shāh Kalīm ullah of Jahānābād.

The Decline of the Chishtiyah Order

Before we conclude this fascinating story of the golden era of *Chishtiyah* order in India, it appears necessary to throw light on its decay which was set in with the passage of time, as was the case with other intellectual and reformative movements. The *Chishtiyah* order, and, for that matter, every other mystical

order, came into existence through a deep attachment of mind and heart toward God. These movements tended to gather themselves around men of piety and spiritual gifts, but, in course of time, they degenerated into a cold formalism of customary rituals and formulas. In this case too, the movement which started with the cultivation of religious experience through love-divine and piety, spirit of sacrifice and humanity, meditations and prayer and missionary zeal was ultimately overtaken by these three-fold erratic tendencies.

(1) An exaggerated belief in the doctrine of pantheistic monism, formulation of its intellectually subtle definitions and their propagation.
(2) Frequent musical recitations accompanied by whirling and ecstatic transports.
(3) Ever increasing celebrations of *ᶜUrs* on the occassion of death anniversaries of the saints which transgressed the limits of *Sharīᶜah.*

The very un-Islamic customs and creeds which were sought to be reformed by the early reformers of indefatigable missionary spirit and zeal hailing from the far off corners of Iran and Turkistān became, indeed, by an irony of fate, such an inseparable part of the later-day mystic rituals that it has now become difficult for the non-Muslims to distinguish them from the religious practices of other polytheistic creeds. The unalloyed monotheism or *Tawhīd*, the corner-stone of Islam, was transformed into pantheistic monism; the path of the Prophet zealously trodden by the *Chishti* precursors became a sign and symbol of those followers of orthodox Islam who were branded as formalists and opponents of mysticism. The *Sharīᶜah* and mysticism marked such a complete parting of their ways that the two came to be regarded as opposed to each other. The use of musical instruments, forbidden by the early *Chishti* saints, were introduced in musical recitations by the later mystics but the deep and real spiritual experience through absorption in the remembrance of God took flight from their concourses. Renunciation of worldly desires and appetites, chosen by the

anchorites of old as their distinctive mark, gave place to the pomposity of grand and stately ceremonials.

And, perhaps, an even greater tragedy resulting from these corrupting influences has been that the sublimated souls who had dedicated their lives to bring the erring humanity back to the overlordship of God from the entanglements of worldly desires and material benefits themselves became the objects of worshipful adoration for their misguided followers. The omniscient Lord has really addressed a warning to these very misguided folk in these words of the Scripture :

> "It is not (possible) for any human being unto whom Allah had given the Scripture and wisdom and the prophethood that he should afterwards have said unto mankind : Be slave of me instead of Allah ; but (what he said was) : Be ye faithful servants of the Lord by virtue of your constant teaching of the Scripture and of your constant study thereof.
>
> "And he commanded you not that ye should take the angels and the prophets for lords. Would he command you to disbelieve after ye had surrendered (to Allah) ?"[1]

1. Q. III : 79-80

MAKHDUM-UL-MULK

SHEIKH SHARAF UD-DIN YAHYA MANERI

Makhdum-ul-Mulk

SHEIKH SHARAF UD-DIN YAHYA MANERI

I

From Birth to Adulthood

Known popularly as Makhdūm-ul-Mulk Bihārī, his name was Ahmad ibn Sheikh Yahya, title Sharaf ud-dīn, and he claimed his descent from one of the Prophet's uncles, Zubair ibn ʿAbdul Muttalib, belonging to the Hashimite clan of the Quraish of Mecca. His grandfather, Maulānā Muhammad Tāj ud-dīn, a contemporary of Shahāb ud-dīn Ghori, was a celebrated scholar and mystic who had emigrated to Manyar[1] in Bihar from the town of Al-Khalīl[2] in Syria.

Maulānā Tāj ud-dīn remained for some time at Maner, where he succeeded in converting quite a large number of persons to Islam; but he ultimately returned to Al-Khalīl, leaving his family at Maner.

The maternal grand-father of Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn, Sheikh Shahāb ud-dīn *Jag Jot* (The light of the world) was also a

1. The town is presently known as Maner, but Ibrāhīm Qawwām Fārūqī, who wrote *Farhang Ibrāhīmī* between 862 A. H. and 879 A. H , gives its name as Manyar.
2. Al-Khalīl, drawing its name from the Prophet Ibrahīm (Abraham) who is stated to be buried there, is at a distance of about 24 kilometres from Jerusalem The town now forms part of Jordan.

renowned mystic Sheikh of *Suharwardiyah* order. Belonging to Kāshghar, he had come down to Jathli,[1] a village about 5 kilometers from Patna. A spiritually animated soul reputed for his piety, he too came of the lineage of Imām Husain. Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn was thus a lineal descendant of the Prophet from his mother's side also.

Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn was born on the last Friday of Shaʿabān, 661 A. H. at Maner. He had three other brothers whose names were Sheikh Khalīl ud-dīn, Sheikh Jalīl ud-dīn and Sheikh Habīb ud-dīn.

Early Education

The system of education followed in those days required the students of primary stage to cram the text of the prescribed books including some short lexicons so as to enable them to store up a copious vocabulary in their mind. The system, however, entailed unnecessary labour and wastage of the time of children. Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn deplored the system in *Maʿadan-ul-Maʿānī*: "When I was a child my teachers got me to learn by heart a number of books like those on infinitive nouns, the first part of *Miftāhul-Lughāt,* and similar other books. We were required to learn these word by word and repeat them. Instead of these books, they could have better got the Qur'ān fixed in our memory."[2]

Unfortunately his memoirs or the biographical accounts neither preserve the names of his earlier teachers nor the books Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn had to study at Maner. It seems that he completed his education up to secondary stage in his

1. The author of *Sīrat-us-Sharaf* writes that the place was captured by the Muslims in 576 A. H., 12 years before Sultān Shahāb ud-dīn Ghorī won the final battle against Prithviraj at Tarain. This raises the question whether Muslims had extended their settlements to the bounds of Bihar and Bengal even before Sultān Shahāb ud-dīn Ghorī laid the foundation of Muslim rule in India. The question, however, needs a deeper probe by the historians.

2. *Maʿad an-ul Maʿānī*, p. 43

home town.

Further Education

Before Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn could leave Maner for further education elsewhere, Providence afforded him an opportunity to come in contact with a reputed scholar and pedagogue of his time, Maulānā Sharaf ud-dīn Abū Towāmah, who had to leave Delhi because of the King's displeasure somehow incurred by him. It is stated that certain academicians, jealous of Maulānā Sharaf ud-dīn, had brought him into discredit with Sultān Ghiyāth ud-dīn Balban. Maulānā Sharaf ud-dīn decided to migrate to the border town of Sonārgaon[1] on the eastern fringe of the then Muslim Kingdom in India. On his way to Sonargaon he stopped for a few days at Maner. The inhabitants of Maner, on coming to know of the Maulānā's worth and ability flocked to pay respect to him. Young Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn was also highly impressed by the piety and learning of Maulānā Sharaf ud-dīn.[2] He requested his parents to let him accompany the Maulānā to Sonārgaon so as to undergo his schooling at the feet of the Maulānā. Speaking of his teacher, in *Khwān-i-Pur Ni'amat*, writes Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn : "Maulānā Sharaf ud-dīn was an erudite scholar, without a peer, whose fame had travelled to the four corners of India."[3]

Shāh Shuʿaib Firdausī relates in *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā* that Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn was so assiduous at his studies that he did not like to spend a moment away from it. As the repast with others normally took a little more time which Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn loathed to waste, his teacher had to permit him

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1 Sonārgaon was then the seat of the Provincial Government of East Bengal Now an insignificant place across the river Brahamputra in Dacca district, and known by the name of Painam, the ruins of its dilapidated buildings and mosques tell the story of its past splendour. The famous national high-way constructed by Sher Shāh Sūrī terminated in the east at Sonārgaon.

2. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*

3. *Khwān-i-Pur Niʿāmat*, p. 15

to take his food alone in his own room.[1] It has been reported that he was so occupied in his studies that he never went through the letters sent to him by his family members, lest these might cause him some anxiety or distraction from his studies.[2]

Having taught him all the then prevalent sciences, religious and discursive, Maulānā Sharaf ud-dīn suggested him to learn something about alchemy too, but Ahmad excused himself by saying : "Education of religious sciences would suffice for me." Maulānā Sharaf ud-dīn had such a high regard for his talented disciple that he offered the hand of his daughter to him. During Ahmad's stay at Sonārgaon, his wife gave birth to a son whom he named Zakī ud-dīn.

Ahmad Returns Home

Ahmad's father, Sheikh Yahya Manerī died on the 11th of Shaʿabān, 690 A. H. Having received the news at Sonārgaon, Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn hastened back to Maner with his son Zakī ud-dīn. As the author of *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā* says, Ahmad left his son under the care of his own mother and begged her to allow him to leave the place for good. He made his way to Delhi with the intention of gaining spiritual insight under the *sūfī* sheikhs at Delhi.

It was the year 690 A. H. or 691 A.H. when Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn set out for Delhi with his brother Sheikh Jalīl ud-dīn. It seems that the careful guidance of his learned teacher had enabled Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn to recognise the worth of the mystics by their piety and spiritual attainments. He paid visits to nearly all the then *sufī* divines of Delhi but was impressed by none except Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Aulia'. For the other mystics of Delhi, his comment was : "If this is spiritual preceptorship, I, too, can claim to be a mystic mentor."[3] Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Aulia' showed due courtesy to Ahmad. They

1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, pp. 131-32
2. *Sīrat-us-Sharaf*, p. 46 ; *Nuzhat ul-Khawātir*, Vol. II, p. 9
3. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 321

had discussion on some literary topic and the Khwāja was impressed by Ahmad's replies to the questions asked by him. However, as his biographers report, the Khwāja remarked, aftei Ahmad had taken leave of him: "He is a hawk soaring high in the sky, but fate has not earmarked him to my lot."[1]

Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn then directed his course to Panipat where he met Bū ᶜAlī Qalandar, but he left him saying: "An attracted devotee that he is, he cannot guide others."[2]

Sheikh Najīb ud-dīn Firdausī

Ahmad Sharaf ud-dīn came back disheartened from Delhi and Panipat. His elder brother Sheikh Jalīl ud-dīn, however, suggested him to see Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn Firdausī and told him about the distinctive features of his order. Ahmad replied: "The one who is the pivot of spiritual perfection at Delhi (meaning Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliaʾ) sent me back with a tray of betels. What shall I gain by meeting others?" But, on the insistence of his brother, he made up his mind to betake himself to Delhi once more. As he related later on, he found himself in a flutter, and profusely perspiring when he got near Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn Firdausī. He says that he had never had a similar experience earlier on meeting any other mystic. As soon as Khwāja Firdausī saw Ahmad, he said: "Chewing betels and carrying betel-leaves in your handkerchief you have come to see me, and still you presume yourself to be an spiritual guide!" Ahmad emitted the betel he was chewing and sat down bewildered as if suddenly awakened to an unthought-of truth. After a while, he requested Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn to accept him under his spiritual preceptorship. The Khwāja graciously agreed to his request but sent him back after taking the *baᶜit* from him.[3]

1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 321
2. *Ibid.*, p. 132
3. *Ibid.*, p. 132

II

The Firdausiyah Order in India

Sheikh Shahāb ud-dīn ʿUmar Suharwardī, the celebrated author of the *Awarif-ul-Maʿārif* and founder of the *Suharwardiyah* order of sufism, pursued his first studies of mysticism under his uncle Khwāja Zia' ud-dīn Abul Najīb ʿAbdul Qādir Suharwardī (d. 563 A.H.). Born at Khwārazm, the latter occupied an eminent place amongst the mystics of his time. One of his prominent disciples, who had also been favoured with the habit of spiritual succession by his mentor, was Ahmad ibn ʿUmar. Popularly known by the name of Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā, Ahmad ibn ʿUmar, too, was a venerable man of God, to whom Sheikh Shahāb ud-dīn Suharwardī presented his famous mystical tract which is to this day a source of inspiration for travellers on the path of mysticism. It is related that Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā blessed the work and prayed to God to grant it immortal fame.

Immersed in rapturous love and divine contemplation, Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā possessed a natural gift of expressing the deepest mysteries of sufism with unrivalled insight and power. The author of *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā* writes:

"He used to expound the subtle points and delicate problems of *Tawhīd* (Unity), *Maʿrifat* (knowledge), *Tarīqat* (pathway of mysticism) and *Haqiqat* (truth). He has left many works, both in prose and poetry, in the Arabic and Persian languages of which one entitled *Tabsarah* and another a tract explaining

the aids necessary to conduct the traveller on the path of mysticism are popular in India."[1]

Shuʿaib Firdausī has quoted, in the *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, a few odes of Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā which, with the inner light of a true mystic, sing the song of the sweet call of the Beloved.

Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā died as a martyr fighting bravely against the invading Mongols on the 10th of Jamada-ul-Ula, 610 A.H. In the line of his spiritual successors Sheikh Mujid ud-dīn Baghdādī,[2] Sheikh Saʿad ud-dīn Hamūya, Bābā Kamāl Junaidī, Sheikh Saif ud-dīn ʿAlī Lānah, Sheikh Saif ud-dīn Bākhirzī, Sheikh Najm ud-dīn Rāzī, Sheikh Jamāl ud-dīn Mubkī and Maulānā Bahā' ud-dīn attained prominence. The author of *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā* relates that Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn ʿAttār, the famous Persian poet, was also united in the bond of spiritual allegiance to Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā.[3]

Ingress of Kubraviyah Order in India

Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā's order of mysticism gained entrance in India through three distinct sources. The progress of Islam was greatly advanced in Kashmir with the arrival of Amīr Saiyid ʿAlī Hamadānī,[4] in 780 A.H., when the greater part of its population embraced Islam.[5] Sheikh Hamadānī was the spiritual vicegerent of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Mamūd ibn ʿAbdullah who was connected to Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā through four connecting links. The mystics of the order of Saiyid ʿAlī Hamadāni flourished in Kashmir by the end of the eleventh century after Hijrah. Sheikh Yakūb Sarfī (d. 1003 A.H.), belonging to the Hamadānī order, was an accomplished scholar of exegesis and Traditions and the teacher of Imām Rabbānī Mujadid Alf Thānī. Mystics of the Hamadānī order are still to be found in Kashmir.

1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 95
2. Author of *Mirsād-ul-ʿAbād*
3. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 99
4. Died in 786 A. H
5. The Religious Quest of India : pp. 55-56

Saiyid Qutb ud-dīn Muhammad Madnī (d. 677 A.H.), another disciple of Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā, came to India during the reign of Sultān Qutb ud-dīn Aibak (or, according to certain annalists, in the times of Sultān Shams ud-dīn Iltutmish) and was appointed Sheikh-ul-Islam at Delhi. Later he conquered Kara (Manikpur) and settled there.[1] In the line of his disciples Sheikh ʿAlā' ud-dīn Jiurī propagated the order under the name of *Junaidiyah* in Deccan where its followers are still to be found at certain places.

The third line of the spiritual descendants of Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā made its debut in India through Khwāja Badr ud-dīn of Samarkand, a noted disciple of Khwāja Saif ud-dīn Bākhirzī, whose spiritual preceptorship took its name from his vicegerent Sheikh Rukn ud-dīn Firdausī.

Khwāja Badr ud-dīn Samarkandī

The mystical order of Khwāja Badr ud-dīn which found entrance into the religious life of Indian Muslims through him laid stress, as its chief characteristic, upon an all absorbing divine contemplation, annihilation of the self, renunciation of the world and all it stands for, and concealment of miraculous powers. When Khwāja Badr ud-dīn came to India, the *Chishtiyah* order was rapidly gaining popularity in the country to become the major spiritual order in Indian Islam. Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī was then the most celebrated saint and a centre of attraction for the vast majority of Indian Muslims. It was an extremely difficult task to gain adherents for an order which demanded concealment of one's spiritual light from the public gaze. Shuʿaib Firdausī who belonged to the *Firdausiyah* order has given, in *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, the teachings of his Sheikh designed to gain a warm mystical yearning

1. His lineal descendants include many divines, scholars and defenders of Islam such as Shāh ʿAlam ullah Naqshbandī, spiritual successor of Saiyid Adam Binnaurī, Saiyid Ahmad Shahīd, Khwāja Ahmad of Nasīrābād and Maulānā Syed ʿAbdul Hai, the author of *Nuzhat-ul-Kawātir*.

and fellowship with God in these words.

"He followed the way of intimate and personal love of God, and emphasised the cultivation of religious education as a bounden duty of the mystics. He demanded that the injunctions of the *Sharīʿah* should be acted upon for the sake of gaining propinquity to God ; for, he used to say that knowledge without action is valueless and action without sincerity fruitless. He advised his followers : 'Never look forward to possess miraculous powers ; for unflinching submission to God constitutes the real blessing and opens the way to ecstatic illuminations.' The *Firdausiyah* order was founded and its aids and rules formulated in India by Khwāja Badr ud-dīn Samarkandī and his disciples. The laity as well as the elect, before him, excepting those few whom God had willed to be discerning, regarded the working of miracles as a pre-requisite of spiritual preceptorship. As everybody knows, quite a number of mystic saints were there in India during the times of Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, as, for example Sheikh-ul-Islam Bahā' ud-dīn Zakariya, Sheikh Najm ud-dīn Sughrā, the Sheikh-ul-Islam of Delhi, Khwāja Badr ud-dīn Samarkandī, Sheikh-ul-Islam Moʿīn ud-dīn Sajazī, the spiritual guide of Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī. God may bless the souls of all these saints but the popular regard of the masses enjoyed by Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī was not shared by any one else. The reason for it was that the Khwāja too often called forth spiritual powers and worked miracles."[1]

Explaining the path of mysticism followed by the *Firdausiyah* order, Shuʿaib Firdausī adds :

"The way of Khwāja Badr ud-dīn Samarkandī differed from that of the other *sūfīs* of India. Some of them were inspired and illuminated souls while others took to the path of spiritual travails and contemplations, prayer and penance. But the way of Khwāja Badr ud-dīn could be described as the 'State of Love.' Absorbed, engulfed and self-effacing, and acting on

1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 122

the mystic maxim to consider oneself dead even before the cessation of life, these travellers of the lovers' path and wanderers of the spiritual realm cast aside all worldly relations and overstep the ring of existence at the very first attempt. The way they put their life at stake requires the traveller to be of indomitable courage and valour and only those who are ready to put off mortality can tread this path."[1]

Khwāja Badr ud-dīn Samarkandī took recourse to recitational auditions and occasionally fell in ecstatic transports. He died in the seventh century, perhaps at the time when Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Aulia' was still alive, but the year of his death has not been mentioned by any biographer.[2]

Khwāja Rukn ud-dīn Firdausī

Khwāja Rukn ud-dīn Firdausī was the favourite disciple and vicegerent of Khwāja Badr ud-dīn Samarkandī. Khwāja Firdausī pursued his studies of mysticism from his very childhood under the care of Khwāja Samarkandī, and attained perfection in religious as well as mystical disciplines. It was under him that the mystic order of Khwāja Samarkandī came to be known as the *Firdausiyah* order. His was also a soul illumined by divine effulgence and rapturous transports, and like his spiritual guide, he too bade farewell to this fleeting world during the life-time of Khwāja Nizam ud-dīn Auliā'.[3]

Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn Firdausī

Being the nephew of Khwāja Rukn ud-dīn Firdausī,

1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 123
2. The year of his death given in *Khazīnatul Asfiā* is 716 A. H. but the author of *Nuzhatul Khwātir* does not consider it to be correct, for he had died, according to him, earlier before the close of the seventh century.
3. The author of *Khazīnatul Asfiā* gives the year of his death as 724 A.H. but this does not appear to be correct, as his spiritual successor Sheikh Najib ud-dīn Firdausī died in 691 A.H. Maulānā 'Abdul Hai appears to be correct in holding the view expressed in *Nuzhatul Khawātir* that Khwāja Rukn ud-dīn died by the close of the seventh century after Hijrah.

Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn had remained under the paternal tutelage of his Sheikh from his childhood and, after the death of his mentor, continued to keep alight the lamp of *Firdausiyah* order as his successor. He not only attained an eminence in the practice of spiritual life but also guided and reared a disciple who reached the highest degree of sanctity, propagated the religious order of his spiritual guides over half a century in the eastern part of the country and, through the excellent precepts of his conduct, interior illumination and intellectual attainments proved himself a peer of such elevated souls as ᶜAin-ul-Qudhāt Hamadānī, Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn ᶜAttār and Maulānā Jalāl ud-dīn Rūmī. Shuᶜaib Firdausī writes about Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn in *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā* "Disdaining fame and popularity, he kept himself concealed behind the veil of obscurity. Verily, those who have reached the highest degree of sanctity keep themselves so hidden from the public gaze that nobody except God knows anything about them. He (Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn) had many a disciple who had reached the stage of inward illumination. Maulānā ᶜĀlam,[1] the author of *Fatāwah Tatār-khāniyah*, was his disciple who has penned beautiful odes giving expression to the unfathomable depth of Divine Essence. The spiritual attainments of Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn Firdausī are hidden behind a mysterious veil."[2]

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1. Maulānā Farīd ud-dīn ᶜĀlam of Indrapat. He wrote *Fatawāh Tatār-khāniyah* in 777 A.H., but named it after his friend Amīr Tatār Khān. Fīroz Shāh wanted the book to be named after its author, but Farīd ud-dīn preferred to remain a ghost writer. He died perhaps in 786 A.H.
2. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 126

III

Life of Self-Discipline

Immediately after taking the pledge of allegiance to Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn Firdausī, says the author of *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, Sharaf ud-dīn was granted permission to propagate the religious discipline of the *Firdausiyah* order. However, Sharaf ud-dīn implored the Khwāja . "I have not had the opportunity to remain with you even for a few days nor have I had any training of the mystic discipline from you, then, how would I be able to shoulder this onerous responsibility?" But the Khwāja assured him that since the robe of vicegerency has been conferred on him through a divine presage, he would be guided in his path by divine inspiration. Thereafter the Khwāja bade him farewell and said, "Whatever news you get in the way, do not return to me."

Only a few days after Sharaf ud-dīn had betaken the journey, he received the news that Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn had put off his earthly body. However, as already bidden by his mentor, Sharaf ud-dīn continued on his journey to Maner.[1]

State of Love

When Sharaf ud-dīn departed from Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn he felt his heart rent by a disquietude of spritual agony. It appeared that the fire of love, a violent affection of God had

1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, pp. 132-33

penetrated into the recesses of his very being. He says:

"No sooner than I met Khwāja Najīb ud-dīn, an agonising disquiet seated itself in my heart and it went on increasing with the passage of time."[1]

When Sharaf ud-dīn reached Behiah,[2] he happened to hear the trill of a peacock, which so stirred the feeling of divine love in him that he breathlessly betook himself to a jungle. His brothers and friends, who accompanied him on his way back home, made a vigorous search but could not find any trace of him. At last, they returned with the warrant of vicegerency issued by Khwāja Najib ud-dīn and other sacred relics given to him by the Khwāja and made these over to his mother.[3]

In the Rājgīr Forest

Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn remained in the forest of Behiah but nobody was able to know his whereabouts. Thereafter, he moved on to the Rājgīr[4] forest, where he was seen once or twice but none of his acquaintances ever succeeded in meeting

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1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 133
2. Behiah is about 48 kilometers from Maner, to the west of Arrah in Shahabad district.
3 *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 133
4. The Rājgīr hills consist of two parallel ranges which run from south-west to north-east, and seldom exceed 1000 feet in height, are for the most part rocky and covered with a low jungle. (The Imperial Gazetteer of India. Vol. XX, p. 54). The place was identified by Dr. Buchnan-Hamilton with *Rajagriha,* the residence of Buddha and capital of ancient Magadha, and by General Cunningham with *Kusa-Nagarapūra* (the town of Kus grass) visited by Hiuen Tsian, and called by him *Kiu-she-lo-pu-lo.* Hiuen Tsiang gives an account of the hot springs found at this place. Of the five hills, first is identified by General Cunningham as Wehbars mountain of Pali annals, on the side of which was the famous Sattapani Cave, where the first Buddhist synod was held in 543 BC. The second hill Ratnagiri, is that called by Fa Hian 'The Fig Tree Cave' where Buddha meditated. (The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XXI, Oxford, 1908, p. 72.)

him. The forest and hills of Rājgīr have always been a favourite resort of recluses of India. Gautam Buddha had selected these very forests for his meditations. During the days of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn's stay in Rājgīr, a number of Hindu *yogīs* and hermits had gone into séclusion to this place. The biographers of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn have given accounts of the discussions Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn had with these *yogīs*. A closet by the side of a hot water spring, known as Makhūm Kund, can still be seen in this forest.

Althrough the period of twelve years Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn lived in the forest, he had given himself up to austerities, intense meditation and arduous religious observances. Passing his days in a state marked by excitation of heart, agitation and bewilderment, he appears to have totally lost the consciousness of his own self by drinking deep the cup of love divine. The leaves of the trees were all he ate in those days. Speaking of the most austere acts to which he had given himself up in those days, he once told his disciple Qāzī Zāhid : "The mortifications I had undergone would have melted even the hills, but of what use had these been to Sharaf ud-dīn."[1] It seems that he was not satisfied with the utility of what he had achieved by these arduous disciplines. Once he said that during the winter season, when it was biting cold, he took bath in cold water instead of taking advantage of the leave granted by the *Sha'rī'ah* for such occasions, and the result was that he fell unconscious and missed the dawn prayer.

Stay in Bihar

During the days Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn was still residing in the Rājgīr forests, a disciple of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliā' bearing the name of his mentor but known as Maulānā Nizām Maulā, came to know about Sharaf ud-dīn from certain persons who had met the Sheikh in that forest. He met Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn along with a few of his disciples. Greatly impressed by

1. *Sīrat-us-Sharaf*, p. 72

the Sheikh, Maulānā Nizām Maulā often used to repair to the jungle to visit the Sheikh In view of the inconvenience Maulānā Nizām Maulā and his friends had to put up, Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn suggested to them: "Your visit causes me a lot of anxiety for the forest is too dangerous. You people should better remain in the city where I would come on Fridays for prayers and meet you." The proposal was accepted and the Sheikh thus used to have a brief sitting with Maulānā Nizām Maulā and others on each Friday. After some time, the admirers of the Sheikh decided to construct a hut at the place the monastery exists now, where Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn used to take rest for a while after Friday prayers or stayed for a day or two sometimes. Maulānā Nizām Maulā got the thatched hut converted into a building. When the construction was completed Maulānā Nizām Maulā invited his friends to a feast and requested Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn to grace the altar carpet. The Sheikh accepted the request but remarked: "Friends, your rendezvous has led me to this pantheon."[1]

The monastery was constructed between 721 to 724 A. H. during the reign of Ghiyāth ud-dīn Tughlaq.[2]

Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq ascended the throne after his father in 725 A. H. Himself an accomplished scholar, he was always too desirous of making the *sufī* saints come out of their seclusion for bringing about moral upliftment of the populace. He forced Khwāja Nāsīr ud-dīn *Chiragh Dehli* to accompany his forces in his last expedition. He also forced other disciples of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliā', Maulāna Fakhr ud-dīn Zarrādī, Maulānā Shams ud-dīn Yahyā and others, to deliver sermons and urge the people to participate in the holy wars. He even made Sheikh Qutb ud-dīn Munawwar of Hansī to come all the way from his monastery to Delhi. When he came to know of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn's abandoning his seclusion after years of retirement in the Rājgīr forests, he sent an order to the

1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 134
2. *Sīrat-us-Sharaf*, p. 81

Governor of Bihar, Majad-ul-Mulk, that a monastery should be got constructed for him and the pargana of Rājgīr given to him for the upkeep of the monastery and his disciples. The king sent a Balghārian[1] prayer-mat to the Sheikh and ordered the Governor to force Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn to accept the royal grant, in case he was not inclined to accept the offer.

Majad-ul-Mulk took the imperial edict to the Sheikh and said, "I dare not force your honour to do what the King has ordered but if you do not accept his offer, it would be construed as my insubordination and incompetence. Everybody is aware of the King's temperament and only God knows what he would do with me." Taking pity on the perplexity of Majad-ul-Mulk, the Sheikh yielded to his request, albeit unwillingly, but when Fīroz Shāh Tughlaq mounted the throne, he returned the Jāgīr.[1] However, the construction of the monastery was taken in hand, and, to borrow the words of Zamīr ud-dīn in *Sīrat-us-Sharaf*:

"The construction of the monastery was started and it was completed within a short period. Majad-ul-Mulk invited all the mystics and disciples of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliā' and numerous other friars for a sitting of musical recitation which continued for pretty long time in the assembly hall. In another portion of the monastery, containing a gallery and a room, arrangements were made for seating the elite. On the Balghārian prayer-mat sent by the King, Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī was seated. When a wandering friar who happened to be there came near Sharaf ud-dīn, the latter said: 'It's all for you. I had simply to comply with the orders of Majad-ul-Mulk, for I had no choice but to obey him who wields the authority. Whatever you see here is for the mendicants and, so far as I am concerned, I do not consider myself even worthy of Islam, much less to grace this prayer-mat.'

"The mendicant replied: 'Makhdūm, who cares for this monastery and the prayer-mat? Whatever respect one pays

1 A town in the north of Turkistān

2. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 135

to you, it is because of the Truth. We have come here on account of your latent spiritual qualities and for your sake alone. Islam will flourish here and gain strength through your blessings.' To this Makhdūm Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī replied : 'Whatever these mendicants say finds the acceptance of God.' Then he added : 'Whoever is himself a Prince commands and the task is accomplished.' "

Spiritual Guidance of the People

For more than half a century (from 724 A.H. to 782 A.H., when he died) Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī continued to inspire spiritual and moral zeal in the people. According to the estimate of Sheikh Husain Mu'iz Shams of Balakh, more than a hundred thousand persons united themselves in the bond of his spiritual paternity of whom not less than three hundred attained spiritual illumination and reached the highest degrees of sanctity. Numerous *yogis*, it is related, were guided by him on the path of mysticism after they had embraced Islam at his hands. The congregations held by the Sheikh, which were attended by persons drawn from all creeds and classes, as was the custom prevailing in those days, served as lecture rooms providing guidance and instruction to the people. Persons desiring an exposition of perplexing issues, raised questions in these meetings and got satisfactory answers. These gatherings never had any predetermined subject for discussion or discourse ; the *sufīs* began their sermons on whatever issue they happened to be contemplating or the topic raised by others. But, almost always these discourses shed light on the hidden meanings of recondite truths and intricate problems of mysticism. Zain Badr 'Arabī, who has compiled the discourses of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn, says in his introduction to the collection : "In every gathering and almost on each occasion, the disciples of the Sheikh or others attending the meetings requested him to elucidate a certain issue pertaining to the *Sharī'ah* or mystic discipline. Hazrat Makhdūm replied to every question in a very pleasant and convincing manner, and expounded the pith and essence of the facts of mute

reality. He answered the questions according to the ability of the inquirer in such a bright and cheerful way that it agreeably occupied the mind of the listeners and adumbrated those subtle facts which are beyond the grasp of human senses."[1]

Sometimes a theological or mystic tract was read in these gatherings. Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī used to throw light upon points of special difficulty during the course of such readings. In this way he used to expound intricate issues pertaining to jurisprudence, Traditions, exegesis and mysticism which were found instructive even by the learned disciples. Another method employed by him for the mental and moral development of his disciples, especially the learned ones, was to write them letters. Perhaps no other spiritual guide, except Mujadid Alf Thānī, has taken recourse to this educative medium for the mental edification and spiritual ennoblement of the people. The forceful style of Makhdūm's writings, combining grace and elegance, assigns a conspicuous place to his letters in the theological literature. In these he has expounded the kernels or factors of higher significance denoting the inner sense of unseen divine content of things. He exerted thereby a strong and potent influence and inspired the people with a longing to attain the state of exalted spiritual integrity. In their effectiveness, gracefulness and forcefulness of expression there would perhaps be few compositions worthy of comparison with these letters in the entire Persian literature. Thus, in addition to those fortunate persons to whom these letters were addressed, thousands have read them with interest down the centuries after the days of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī; in the monasteries these letters have been studiously perused and discussed, and they still hold the attention of those who muse over them in search of the new dimensions of intuitive insight and illumination of heart. It would be difficult to exaggerate the strength and vigour of these letters which, notwithstanding the lapse of several centuries when they were written, still preserve their freshness and emotional appeal.

1. *Ma'adan-ul-Ma'ānī*

IV

Character and Deportment

A conspicuous trait of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī's sublime character was the annihilation of his self in love—the reward of his austere devotional acts and religious travails—reflecting a deep, satisfying and intimate love which effaces the very existence of the lover. Every word of his letters and discourses signifies the earnest desire and passionate love of God thus described by Khwāja Naqshband: "What I desire most is to have no desire at all."

This was the patrimony of the mystic order founded by Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā, whose most worthy successor was Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī.

Shu^{c}aib Firdausī relates that in a meeting of celebrated *sufī* saints every one expressed the desire cherished by him. When the turn of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī came, he said: "What I desire is that I should remain unknown in this world as well as in the world beyond."[2]

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī once gave expression to his own self-abandonment in these words: "Wholly overtaken by the illusions of Satan, I know neither anything about my own self nor find any trace of Islam in me."[3]

In a letter which Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī wrote to a friend, he laid emphasis on the importance of shedding tears over one's own vicious self. The letter, quoted here, perhaps throws light on the conflagration consuming his own heart.

"The gnostics swear to God that nothing is dearer to God than bewailing of a man over the failings of his own self: therefore, let us learn how to lament and bemoan from the precursor of true faith, Khwāja Owais Qarnī, whose soul may be blessed by God. He who laments not always over his own self, O brother, is a claimant oblivious of the Day of Requital; he is just a dead meat whose heart is crushed by his longings. And what wistful longings have cast their shadows over every heart: everybody yearns for glory and riches, authority and power, pleasure and satisfaction, fame and honour and, along with all these, propinquity to God as well. But, by God, this is impossible."[1]

Another letter written by Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī to show the way of self demolition depicts his own portrait, for, the mystic saints were not hypocrites to preach what they themselves did not practise. Since they strictly followed the Quranic injunction: "Never say what you do not practise yourself," this letter must have been written by Makhdūm after attaining the entelechy of spiritual life.

"Since you have reached the threshold of your Lord, your self should be cleansed of all earthly defilements and desires. Even if you don a thousand crowns of royalty, how would you conceal the reality of your self—your beggarly countenance and forlorn complexion. Dust that settles over a thing gets always washed away: but the gloominess of your subliminal self can never change itself."[2]

In yet another letter he plainly laments thus over himself:

"We are ill-starred, afflicted and abased; greedy as hogs, we are mad after our desires; attuned to force of habit, we are the negligent and heedless who witlessly move in a groove; we are really listless and thoughtless; and our presumption that we follow *Tawhīd* or that we tread the path of God-moved souls is simply an indication of our temerity and crass ignorance. Even the Jews and fire-worshippers, cathedrals and pantheons feel

1. 11th letter
2. 27th letter

ashamed of us."[1]

A supplication often recited by him expresses, in all intensity and colour, his innermost thoughts and feelings.

A weakling in Thy path I am, my God ;
Like a crippled ant, in a well I plod.
Without any achievement, strength or wealth ;
I have neither the heart to bewail nor patience to repose.
Deprived of faith, even the world took leave of me ;
Impoverished of the soul, I cling to exterior form.
Neither a Muslim nor a heathen, I waver in minds two ;
Forlorn and abandoned, I know not what to do.
I shed tears and bemoan a lot, my Lord.
Empty-handed that I am, burdensome is the task.
In this prison of bodily frame, I have suffered a lot ;
Feckles has been made by exertion my labouring heart.
Fettered I sit in this prison (of desires and sins) ;
Who else save Thee can give me a helping hand.
Clear the obstacles (that block the) path of my soul ;
And let my heart be cleansed through flood of tears.
On Thy path I have set my foot, though immersed in sin ;
Mercy, my God, though I hail from the prison of sin.

Having arrived at the point of annihilation which effaces the existence of the lover, he was unconcerned with the acclamation and condemnation of the people. In a letter he says :

"What have the ecstatics to lose or gain by the adulation or denunciation of the multitude? To them these make little difference. They do not consider him worthy who is acclaimed by the people nor a fellow villified by the masses is regarded by them as wicked : to them only he is virtuous who meets the approval of the Lord and only he is vile who is censured by God."

1. 31st letter

As a natural outcome of his intoxication and losing his self in love divine, he was rewarded with miraculous powers like other ecstatics. Incessant miracles were worked by him but he ever entertained an aversion for miracles or the exhibition of similar other acts which could be adduced as a proof of his attaining the heights of sanctity. Shuʿaib Firdausī writes in *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*:

"His miraculous powers very often called forth wonderful acts clearly beyond the operation of natural laws, but he was always so averse to miracles that he pleaded his incompetence to perform such acts. If anybody insisted upon his help for the fulfilment of his needs he used to refer him to Mīrān Jalāl Diwānā."[1]

This was the time when credulous masses considered the miraculous powers possessed by a saint as the only touchstone of his sanctity and godliness. It is reported that once a few persons brought some dead flies to him and said: "A well-known maxim runs: the Sheikh bestows life and death. Therefore, cause these flies to come to life again." Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī replied: "I am myself helpless. How can I restore life to others?"

Excellent Morals

The inspiration drawn by the *sufi* saints from the prophetic light has ever been the most vital element in shaping the life and character of these men of God: the warmth of personal feeling for a prophet thus praised by God; 'Lo! Thou art of excellent character,'[2] linked them to him by a close personal affinity which transfigures all thoughts and governs all actions. It was this loving regard of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī for the Prophet of Islam which has been testified in these words by his biographer: "The moral conduct of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn was the very image of the Prophet's character."[3]

1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 137
2. Q. LXVIII: 4
3. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 137

And how much Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī considered it essential to cast one's morals and behaviour in the mould of Prophet's character is revealed by his letters which, in fact, bring forth his own moral precepts and rules of conduct.

"In truth and reality virtuous conduct consists of the moral code followed by the learned among the followers of mystic path. They adhere to the injunctions of the *Sharīʿah* and measure the excellence of their performance with the yardstick of Prophet's conduct. Whosoever does not make a search for the rules of the *Sharīʿah* can never hope to attain anything through the path of mysticism."[1]

In another letter he says that "the more one follows the path chalked out by the *Sharīʿah*, the more one becomes virtuous in conduct; and the more one attains moral excellence, the more one is loved by God. For moral rectitude is the bequest of Adam and a gift from God, there is nothing goodlier for the believer than virtuous code of conduct nor an adornment as exquisite as this. Good moral conduct really means acting on the precepts of God and the *Sharīʿah* brought by His Prophet; for, the behaviour and deportment of the Prophet, on whom be peace and blessings, were winsomely pleasing. Whoever claims to follow the Prophet, should pattern his life after him."[2]

The life sketch of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī depicted by his biographers shows that the constant aim of his endeavours was to follow the Prophet of Islam. In moral conduct and behaviour, brotherly love and compassion for his fellow beings, regard for the interests of other people and in consoling the broken-hearted he had all the earmarks of the Prophet's character.

Kindliness

He possessed a kindliness of heart that extended to all men, whether friends or foes, in prosperity or in distress. In a letter written by him he calls it an inborn virtue and motivating

1. 59th letter
2. *Ibid*

power of the gnostics and men of God, perhaps, because he had himself imbibed this quality in the journey of his spirit. Depicting the characteristics of a true mystic he says:

"Like the glorious lamp of the heaven his benevolence goes out to all, young and old; he remains hungry and unclad but feeds and clothes others. He cares not for the injustice done to him nor for the malevolence of those who are hard upon him. Instead, he intercedes for them, repays goodness for evil and gives thanks for abuses. Do you know why does he do so? Being himself saved and secured, his heart is filled with a desire to do good to all. Like the sun which shines over mountains and vales, his benevolence encompasses friends and foes alike; in humility he is like the earth trodden by all; in generosity he is like the river whose lofty surge benefits the friends as well as enemies. Independent of every attachment, the downpour of his benignity showers over the East as much as over the West. He finds everything indwelling in God as manifestations of the same Creator and endued with qualities assigned by Him. Whoever lacks these qualities of spirit cannot lay a claim to be a traveller on the path of mysticism."[1]

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī was, like other mystic preceptors, an embodiment of charity and benevolence. Overflowing with the milk of humanity he considered it a grievous sin to injure the feelings of others.

Once, when he was keeping a voluntary fast, a certain person brought some present and begged him to partake it. Makhdūm took it and said: "One can make up for the broken fast but not for the broken heart."

He always concealed the blemish of others and if he was ever told of the lapse or misdemeanour of someone, he immediately came out with an explanation on behalf of the person reported to have committed the misdeed.

It has been related in *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā* that once he had to join a congregational prayer led by a man who was a drunkard.

1. 24th letter

Somebody complained about it but Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī replied: "He should not be drunk all the time." The complainant said: "Yes, he ever remains drunk." "But not during Ramadhan," was the reply given by Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī.[1]

Severance of Worldly Ties

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī had reached the stage where the heart is so full of Divine love that it displaces the love of everything else.

He had accepted the *jāgīr* granted by Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq in order to save Majad-ul-Mulk from the wrath of the Sultān. He returned the *jāgīr* as soon as Sultān Fīroz Shāh Tughlaq ascended the throne. If the story related by Zamīr ud-dīn in *Sīrat-us-Sharaf* on the authority of *Mūnis-ul-Qulūb* is correct, Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī went all the the way from Maner to Delhi to return the royal edict granting the fief to him and thereafter he never took any interest in the extension or renovation of the monastery Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq got constructed for him.

Sheikh Hamīd ud-dīn was a close friend of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī. Once he came to Makhdūm in the midnight. Makhdūm came out and sat down in the courtyard with him. After a while Sheikh Hamīd ud-dīn said, "The courtyard will look nice if this platform is extended. Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī immediately got up and replied, "I thought that you had come in the dead of night to seek solution of some religious problem but I find that I was wrong. You want the platform to be extended. Actually you ought to have suggested that this idol-house should be brought to ruins."[2]

Lofty Ideals

The lofty ideals worthy of a life's endeavour upon which

1. *Manāqib-ul-Asfiā*, p. 141
2. *Sīrat-us-Sharaf*, p. 123

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī had always had his eyes set, were the spur that made him achieve true piety of the soul. This is amply borne out by his letters to his friends and disciples whom he always told that only those whose aims were worthy, aspirations high, designs wise and purposes steadfast could hope to reach the goal of a soaring ambition. Here is a letter in which he wrote to one of his disciples:

"Howsoever spiritless you might be, my brother, you ought to have courage to look upward. There is nothing in the world that can dampen the eager desire of a man : the lofty aspirations of man are really too burdensome even for the earth and heaven, empyrean and the mighty Throne, heaven and hell; and that is why a poet says :

Neither fear they hell nor long for heaven ;
Made of a special texture is this group of men.
They have their grip on the Divine Being ;
Whatever else is there, is below their feet.
Unless the way is swept with the broom of *Not* ;
How can ye find a way to the mansion of God.

"The exalted ideal of a man of God needs the height of heavens and the space of universe for its flight of ambition, and there is nothing more lofty and consecrated than the ambition to attain the gnosis of Supreme Being. The ambition of these God-moved souls does not perambulate round the Kaʿaba or *Bait-ul-Muqaddas* nor does it limit its flight to the heaven and earth. Holiness be to God : What a noble task is this ! The man is sitting with his feet on the ground, his head resting on his knees, but the height of his ambition passes beyond the limits of universe. What a lofty aspiration is this that no other created being except man made of water and clay can fancy."[1]

Zamīr ud-dīn has made a correct assessment of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī's lofty and insatiable ambition in *Sīrat-us-Sharaf*. "He had," says Zamīr ud-dīn, "always his gaze fixed on what was still to be achieved, for whatever he had already achieved

1. 4th letter

lost its importance in his eyes. His soaring ambition and courage always spurred him to attain still higher and higher stages of sanctity."

And he desired that others too should have the same courage and lofty aspiration. In a latter he says:

"Supposing both the worlds were brought at your threshold and you were told that all these belong to you, and that you might do whatever you like with them. You should, however, be careful not to lose sight of that which is beyond this world and the next and which constitutes the only means to reach the Real Beloved. This is why the gnostics have said:

This world is a torment and the other one an snare of avarice;
I shall never have the two, even if an oat were their price."

In another letter he advised his disciples:

"Verily, the dauntless spirit of resolution encompasses everything; whereas indetermination allows everything to fall out. This is a matter of primary importance for adopting the means to reach the real goal."

Separation and Isolation

In their swift flight of the spirit the ecstatics soar to those higher domains of spirituality which are completely beyond the reach of the uninitiated. It is difficult even to conceive of the effulgence of Divine love and the source of knowledge which is laid open before them. Leading a cloistered life within the society, their spirits are roving when they appear to be quiescent. To those who have never had the opportunity to betake the path of mysticism, the ecstatics appear to be engaged in the edification and guidance of their followers—a task imposed on them as the vicegerents of the Prophet—but the stages through which they have to pass before attaining the perfection of interior spirit can be made known only by those who have already attained inward illumination. Renunciation of the worldly desires is considered by some as the only essential discipline for the real cognition of

Divine Essence, but in the passage quoted here Makhdūm Yaḥyā Manerī explains some of its higher stages through which the gnostics have to find their way before attaining their cherished goal. He says: "*Separation* involves renunciation of all worldy desires and relationships whereas *isolation* means that the lover is isolated from all, including his own self, to attain propinquity with the Beloved. Without a care to trouble his heart, or a concern dependent on interest, or a solicitude involving an element of desire, or anxiety to distract his attention, his aspiration soars high beyond the empyrean to meet his longed-for Beloved. He feels no pleasure without his Beloved even if this world and the world beyond were placed at his feet, nor has he any longing for the earth or heavens in the presence of his True-love. Someone has truly said that with God there is no anxiety and without God there is no pleasure. That is why it has been asserted by the gnostics that whoever is away from God is afflicted even though he may hold the key of the treasures of all the lands; while a penniless mendicant having communion with God is the king of both the worlds even if he hasn't enough to fill his belly."[1]

In another letter he writes:[2]

"The Friend is nigh even if he is away and the stranger is away even if he be present with you. But this would happen only when you abandon the world and attain the reality of your own self, and cast off your heart as did the companions of the cave. You should make the heart a cave for thyself, offer your funeral prayers therein and throw away the animality of your desires out of your inmost self. Only then the secrets of spiritual realm will be manifested unto you as was done to the companions of the cave. (Then you would witness what has been stated thus in the Qur'ān):

"If thou hadst observed them closely thou hadst assuredly turned away from them in flight, and hadst been filled

1. Letter No 72
2. *Sīrat-us-Sharaf*, p. 144

with awe of them."[1]

Enjoining the Right Course

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī had renounced all worldly desires and relationships and passed beyond the stages of *separation* and *isolation*, which meant abandonment of all cares and worries, but he was, nevertheless, always solicitous of the welfare of the poor and afflicted. We find him corresponding with the then sovereigns to restore justice to whom it had been denied and asking the kings and rulers to betake the path of virtue and equity.

One Khwāja ʿĀbid of Zafarābād, who had been deprived of his property, approached Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī. He wrote a letter to Sultān Fīroz Shāh Sharqī in which he first quoted the Traditions of the Prophet and his companions expressing concern to see that justice is done to everybody. Thereafter he wrote:

"Thanks be to God that today he graces the throne who is the hope of the oppressed and the miserable and who is handing out even justice to everyone. It is for this sublime trait that the Prophet has said that 'a moment spent in dispensing justice is better than sixty years given out to prayers.' "[2]

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī had received his education at Sonārgaon and therefore he was particularly interested in the affairs of Bengal and the welfare of Muslims in that region. A letter written by Maulānā Muzaffar of Balakh to Sultān Ghiyāth ud-dīn of Bengal shows how keenly interested was Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī in the well-being of Bengal. He says: "I find Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn always extremely eager for the prosperity of this country. Of a fact, God has favoured this land with the presence of this 'Legion of the Lord' on its soil."[3]

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1. Q. XVIII: 18
2. *Sīrat-us-Sharaf*, p. 144
3. *Ibid.*, p. 125

Following the Prophet

The wayfarers of the path of purity come to know, as they proceed ahead on their spiritual journey, how essential it is to follow the example of the Prophet in its minutest detail. Also, the reality dawns on them that the mystic state of composure can never be reached without following the Prophet wholeheartedly and adapting one's life in complete harmony with the way of the *Sharī'ah*. How convinced was Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī of this essential doctrine of mysticism can be seen from his letter given here. He begins it with a quotation from the Qur'ān:

"Say, (O Muhammad to mankind): If ye love Allah, follow me, Allah will love you."[1] These words of God put a seal on the truth thus expressed by someone.

Seek not a new path, his word is gospel,
Seal your lips and stop all prattle.
Whate'er says he, saith the Lord,
Whate'er he does, is an act of God,
Be dust unto him to wear the crown,
To have your way, first knuckle down.
Like the dust of his way, if not is he,
He'll lick the dust, even if an angel be he.

"This shows that those foolish and ignorant people who do not follow in the footsteps of the Prophet out of their vanity, ignorance or immodesty, can never find the glimpse of enlightenment. Verily, it is impossible to find the correct way to the higher domains of spirituality without a guide. That is why someone has said—the blind can never find his way without a staff in hand; the way is long and full of hazards, therefore, have a pathfinder, O lad."[2]

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī followed this rule scrupulously all through his life. The day he died, at the age of one hundred and twentyone years, he performed the last ablution, despite his illness and weakness, as graphically described by Sheikh Zain

1. Q. III : 31
2. 50th letter

Badr ᶜArabī.

"He took off his gown and asked for water, rolled up his sleeves and cleansed his teeth. Thereafter he started performing ablution with the prayer: 'I begin in the name of God, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful.' He recited different prayers before beginning to wash different parts of his body. When he was washing his elbows, Sheikh Khalīl reminded him that he had forgotten to wash his face. He then began the ablution afresh, performing every act even more carefully. Qāzī Zāhid tried to help him in washing the right foot, but he forbade him. After performing the ablution, he asked for a comb and prayer mat. Having combed his beard he performed two *rakᶜats* of prayer."[1]

Because of his ardent desire to follow the example of the Prophet, he abhorred every innovation in religion. He was so careful in this regard that once he instructed his disciples:

"Whenever you find that any action of the Prophet has been so mixed up with an innovation that your action can be construed as acting on the innovation, then it is better to forgo the action to follow the Prophet instead of doing something that strengthens the innovation in religion."[2]

1. *Wafāt Nāmah*, p. 12
2. *Khwan Pur Niᶜāmat.*

V

On the Death-bed

The description of the life and spiritual attainments of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Makhdūm Yahya Manerī left by his contemporaries and biographers are far too mearge to bring out in any detail all of his qualities of mind and heart. Nevertheless, even if these sketchy accounts were not available, the vivid portrayal of Makhdūm's departure from this fleeting world given by his chief disciple and spiritual successor, Sheikh Zain Badr ᶜArabī, who was in the service of his mentor all through the period, would have been sufficient to leave an unforgettable impression of this prince among the men of God. The biographical literature of the Muslim saints and the elects contains graphic accounts of their deaths portraying the greatness of these souls, their strong attachment to God and the intensity of their faith and conviction, which, by the same token, furnish a proof of the highest reaches of religion to which Islam is capable of elevating the mortals. Also, the Muslim annalists are unique in preserving the death-bed accounts of their co-religionists in such large numbers which are not only faith inspiring but also provide a glimpse of the inmost recesses of these men at the most critical moment of their life.

The description of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī's last moments under the shadow of death would show the strengh of his faith in God, his vigilant care to follow the path of *Sharīᶜah*, his anxiety for the welfare of Islam and its followers, his confidence

in the mercy of God and his concern for the salvation of his own soul. Sheikh Zain Badr ʿArabī writes: "It was Wednesday, the 5th of Shawwāl, 782 A. H. when I went to pay my respect to the Sheikh. He was sitting on a carpet, leaning against a pillow, after performing the dawn prayers in the new room constructed by Nizām ud-dīn Khwāja Malik. His brother Sheikh Jalīl ud-dīn, Qāzī Shams ud-dīn and several other relations and disciples who had been attending him all through the previous night were present there. The Sheikh said: 'There is no power, no might but from Allah, the Great' and asked us to join in the recital. After a while he said smilingly: 'Holiness be to God. Even at this moment the devil still wants to create doubts in my mind about the Unity of God but to no avail.' He kept himself busy in the praise of God, often repeating joyfully: 'It is a favour from my Lord, it is a favour from my Lord.'

"An hour or so before noon the Sheikh came out in the courtyard and sat down on a carpet taking the support of a pillow. He held out his hands as if he wanted to bid farewell to us. First came forward Qāzī Shams ud-dīn whose hands he kept holding for a while. Taking the hands of Qāzī Zāhid, he placed them on his chest and said: 'We are the same lovelorn. But no, we are not better than the earth beneath their feet.' He summoned all of us turn by turn, kissed our hands and beards, bade us to pin our hopes in the mercy and forgiveness of God saying: 'Despair not of the mercy of Allah, Who forgiveth all sins.'[1]

"And then he recited the verses which meant:

O God, stream of thy mercy flows for all,
Only a drop from it is all I want.

"Then, turning to us, he began reciting the Creed:

'I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah, Who is without a partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Apostle......I am agreeable to Allah as our

1. Q. XXXIX: 53

Lord, Islam as our religion, Muhammad as our Prophet, Qur'ān as our canon, Ka'abah as our *Qiblah*, the believers as our brothers, Heaven as the reward and Hell as the punishment (by God).'

"Thereafter he called up several of us one by one. Some he encouraged and comforted with the hope of deliverance on the Day of Judgement; others he asked never to abandon hope in the mercy of God and to be careful of their faith.

"I stepped ahead and kissed his hands. Thereupon he asked: 'Who is it?' 'It is a beggar at your threshold,' said I, 'desirous of being accepted as thy serf.' He replied, 'I accept you and your entire household. If God helps me I shall never forsake you.'

"You are our mentor," I said again, "while I expect even your servants to be in the good grace of God."

"Yes, there is much to be hoped," he replied.

"By that time Qāzī Shams ud-dīn came up to him. Maulānā Sahāb ud-dīn Hilāl asked, 'Makhdūm, what about Qāzī Shams ud-dīn? He is here.' He replied, 'What have I to say about him. He is my son and brother. I have already conferred on him the habit of medicants. It was only for his sake that I wrote so much, otherwise who would have cared to write all this.'

"Then he turned to Sheikh Khalīl ud-dīn and said, 'Take heart, Khalīl. Scholars and friars shall never turn their backs upon you. When Malik Nizām ud-dīn Khwāja comes to you, convey my respects to him and tell him that I am departing from the world well pleased with him. He will never forsake you.' Sheikh Khalīl ud-dīn gave way to tears but Makdūm consoled him. In the meantime other disciples and attendants came to pay their respect. For each he invoked divine blessings and commended them to have faith in the benignity and forgiveness of God. Sultān Shāh, the administrator of pargana Rājgīr, brought some medicine for him but Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī declined to accept the present and returned it with thanks.

"Amīr Shahāb ud-dīn came to pay a visit with his son.

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī asked the boy to recite any five verses of the Qur'ān but the boy being too young could not recite the verses. Another boy, son of Saiyid Zahīr ud-dīn, was also present at the time and he recited the last portion of *Surat-ul-Fath*. As soon as the boy began reciting the Qur'ān, Makhdūm got up to sit in a reverential posture.

"The time for afternoon prayer was drawing near. Makhdūm took off his gown and asked to fetch water for him. He rolled up the sleeves of his shirt, cleansed his teeth and started performing ablution in the name of God. He carefully recited the different supplications prescribed for each act but forgot to wash his face. On being reminded, he started the ablution afresh. The ablution completed, he asked for a comb and prayer mat, combed his beard and performed two *rakᶜats* of prayer. He took a little rest after the prayer and then performed the *maghrib* (evening) prayer.

"Feeling exhausted, Makhdūm lay down on a cot surrounded by his disciples and friends. After relaxing for a few minutes, he started reciting:

> I begin in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
>
> There is no God save Thee. Be Thou Glorified! Lo! I have been a wrong-doer.[1]
>
> I begin in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
>
> I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah Who is without a partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Servant and Apostle.
>
> There is no power, no might but from Allah, the most High, the Great.

"Thereafter he repeated the formula: 'I begin in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful' several times and came out with all his heart: 'Muhammad........Muhammad........ Muhammad......O Allah! Shower Thy blessings on Muhammad

1. Q. XXI: 87

and the descendants of Muhammad.'

"This he followed up with the recitation of the following verses of *Suratul-Mā'ida* :

> O Allah, Lord of us! Send down for us a table spread with food from heaven, that it may be a feast for us, for the first of us and for the last of us, and a sign from Thee. Give us sustenance, for Thou art the Best of Sustainers.
>
> Allah said : Lo! I send it down for you. And whoso disbelieveth of you afterward, him surely will I punish with a punishment wherewith I have not punished any of (My) creatures.
>
> And when Allah saith : O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind : Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? he saith : Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then Thou knowest it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy Mind. *Lo!* Thou, only Thou, art the Knower of Things Hidden?
>
> I speak unto them only that which Thou commanded me, (saying) : Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou tookest me Thou wast the Watcher over them. Thou art Witness over all things.
>
> If Thou punish them, lo! they are Thy slaves, and if Thou forgive them (lo! they are Thy slaves). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, the Wise.
>
> Allah saith : This is a day in which their truthfulness profiteth the truthful, for theirs are Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they are secure for ever, Allah taking pleasure in them and they in Him. That is the great triumph.
>
> Unto Allah belongeth the Sovereignty of heavens and the earth and whatsoever is therein, and He is Able to do all things.[1]

1. Q. V : 114-120

"And then he began to declaim: 'I am agreeable with Allah as our Lord, Islam as our relgion and Muhammad as our Prophet.'

He recited thrice the creed of Muslim faith from the bottom of his heart and then began the invocation:

> O Lord our God guide the followers of Muhammad (on the right path); O Allah, have mercy on the followers of Muhammad; O Allah, forgive the followers of Muhammad, O Allah, be lenient to the followers of Muhammad; O Allah, help the followers of Muhammad; O Allah, uphold him who stands by the religion of Muhammad; O Allah, increase the followers of Muhammad and let them not decrease; O Allah, debase those who wish to humiliate the religion of Muhammad, on whom be Thy blessings, O Most-Merciful.

"With these words his voice failed but he continued to recite:

> There shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.........There is no deity but Allah.........I begin in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

"No sooner had he uttered the last word his soul took flight to its celestial abode.

"This was the night of Thursday, the 6th of Shawwāl, 782 A. H. when the time for *ʿishā'* prayer had just begun,"[1]

The death of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī answers description of the last journey of a sublimated soul portrayed beautifully by Ibn Yamīnī in these verses.

Don't see the heart of Ibn Yamīnī dipped in blood;
Lo! when he bid farewell to this fleeting world.
Scripture in hand, foot on stirrup and eyes fixed on the friend,
With a smile on his lips, he set off with the angel of death.

Funeral Service

The funeral prayer was led by Sheikh Ashraf Jahāngīr

1. *Wafāt Nāmah.*

Samnānī. As related in *Laṭa'if Ashrafī*[1], the bier of Makhdūm was kept on the way as instructed by him. Sheikh Ashraf Jahāngīr, on his way from Delhi to Pandwah in Bengal, where he was going to pay a visit to the renowned Chishtiyah Sheikh ʿAlā' ul-Haq of Lahore, arrived at Bihar Sharīf just when the bier had been placed there for someone to come and lead the funeral service as desired by the departing mentor. Sheikh Ashraf Jahāngīr Samnānī led the funeral service and lowered the bier in the grave.[2]

The grave was made of mud and unburnt bricks, and no dome was built on it. During the reign of Sūrī dynasty, a mosque, a tank and some residential apartments were constructed round the grave but no tomb with stones and burnt bricks was built in deference to the injunctions of *Sharīʿah* followed so meticulously by Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī.

Disciples

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī left, according to *Sīrat-us-Sharaf*, more than a hundred thousand souls who had taken oath of allegiance to him but notwithstanding the possible exaggeration by Syed Zamīr ud-dīn, there is no doubt that a very large number of people were spiritually united with him. Of these, the number of those who had been endowed with inward illumination of the soul runs into hundreds.

Writings

The list of works reported to have been put into writing by Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī is quite extensive but, unfortunately, only a few of these survive today. The books still preserved are: *Rāhat ul-Qulūb*, *ʿAjwebā*, *Fawā'id-i-Ruknī*, *Irshād ul-Tālbīn*, *Irshād ul-Sālkīn*, *Risālah Makkiyah*, *Maʿadan ul-Maʿānī*, *Ishārāt-i-Mukh-ul-Maʿānī*, *Khwān Pur Niʿamat*, *Tuhfah-i-Ghaibī*, *Risālah Dar*

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1. A biography of Sheikh Ashraf Jahāngīr Samnānī by his disciple Nizām-ud-dīn Yamīnī, alias Nizām Haji Gharīb-ul-Yamīnī.
2. *Laṭā'if Ashrafī*, p. 94

Talab-i-Tālibān, *Malfūzāt*, *Zād-i-Safar*, *ʿAqaʾid-i-Sharafī*, *Fawāʾid Murīdīn*, *Bahr-ul-Maʿānī*, *Safar-ul-Muzaffar*, *Kanz-ul-Maʿānī*, *Ganj-i-Lāyafna*, *Mūnis-ul-Marīdīn* and *Sharah Adāb-ul-Murīdīn*.[1] However, still more significant composition bearing witness to his literary gifts and giving an insight into the inner light of his spirituality is the collection of his letters compiled under the name of *Maktūbāt-i-Seh Sadī*.

1. *Sīrat-us-Sharaf* and *Nuzhat-ul-Khawātir*

VI

Makhdum's Letters

A living monument of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī reflecting his deep knowledge and spiritual enlightenment is the collection of his letters. In their depth of ideas, remarkable critical expression, exposition of subtle issues, acuteness of observation, correct understanding of the spirit of religion, insight in the revealed truth and light of divine knowledge along with the single-minded devotion to God and veneration of the Prophet, the letters of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī and Mujadid Alf Thānī occupy a place of distinction in the Islamic literature. These letters show the sublimity of intuitive vision and the exalted spiritual integrity of their writers who have successfully unfolded the living seed of faith in God, intuitively grasped ideas, the aids to purification of self, and the methods of stimulating and enriching the spiritual life. They give us a glimpse of the lofty domains of spirituality to which these men of God had gained an access.

But apart from exhibiting an insight into the contents of spirit and religion, these letters written in a direct and limpid style without sacrificing elegance and grace have all the simplicity of a great art, and contain passages that can take their place among the masterpieces of literature in any language of the world. It is, however, an irony of fate that the compositions of only those have been acknowledged as falling within the purview of literature who had exclusively devoted themselves to

the pursuit of *belles-lettres* or the literary art, that is, aesthetic rather than informative or scientific branches of learning. In the bygone ages normally the court amanuenses or those writers who displayed their linguistic attainments through rhetorical ingenuities gained recognition as litterateurs. The result of it was that in the history of Arabic literature ʿAbdul Hamīd al-Kātib, Abū Is'hāq as-Sābī, Ibn ul-ʿAmīd, Sāheb Ibn ʿAbbād, Abū Bakr Khwārzami, Abul Qāsim Harīrī and Qāzī Fādhīl became the big names as writers with distinctive style although a greater portion of their rhymed and cadenced compositions reflect artificiality as well as lack of vigour and effectiveness. Compared to these writers, Al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Shaddād, Sheikh Muhī ud-dīn ibn ʿArabī, Abū Hayyān Tawhīdī, Ibn Qayyim and Ibn Khaldūn have a greater claim to our esteem as knights of the plume for their smoothness and facility of arguments, masterly handling of the subjects, attractive style of expression and portrayal of tender susceptibilities and affections. But, unfortunately, their only fault was that they chose to write on religion or some other serious subject instead of applying themselves to the works written merely to please the ear or to display their command over language.

It is interesting to see a writer often taking the pen in hand for producing works of two kinds, one displaying rhetorical ingenuities and flowers of eloquence and the other a model of simple and direct prose; the former is deemed admirable by his contemporaries and the writer himself considers it to be his lofty and ennobling attainment; but the latter work is highly esteemed by the subsequent generations which consign the former to the shelves of the libraries and grace the others with a lasting fame. The book Ibn al-Jawzī was so proud of that he named it *Al-Modahish* or 'Wondrous Strange' is unheard of today but his miscellanea of personal experiences and events written in a plain and simple language and totally devoid of rhetorical adornment, to which he perhaps attached little importance, is now prized in the literary circles.

If we go through the history of Persian literature, we would

find Zahūrī, Abul Fadhal and Niʿāmat Khān ʿĀlī dominating the style of Persian prose. However, if a natural and unaffected expression of emotions and narration of plain, plump facts were to be regarded as the yard-stick for perfect model of prose writing, then very little of their writings, marred as they are by florid and verbose style, rhetorical artifices and verbal conceits, would stand the test of standard prose. As against these, there would be numerous other works always ignored by the critics and historians of Persian literature which would measure up to the criterion of a perfect model of prose writing. We would find that the greater part of the letters written by Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī, Mujadid Alf Thānī, Sheikh Ahmad Farūqi and Aurangzeb ʿAlamgīr and parts of Izālatul Khifā' of Shāh Walī ullah and Tuhfa' Athna ʿAshriyah of Shāh ʿAbdul Azīz as unrivalled in the style and structure of sentences. But it seems that in almost every language certain limits have been set which circumscribe literary writings and discourage the search of masterpieces written in a different style and diction on other serious subjects. And, the result has been that for centuries innumerable jewels of elegance and grace have been lying beneath the dust unknown, unnoticed.

Literary critics more often overlook the fact that effectiveness of a writing, whether prose or poetry, which imparts it an enduring fame, is the outcome of an inmost craving of its writer to express the truth known or felt by him. A softhearted friend of humanity gifted with the loftiness of tone and stateliness of language, and moved by an earnest longing to convey a heartfelt reality, infuses a touch of tenderness and feeling to his writing that makes a dent in every heart. Such a writing preserves its uniqueness without end.

Literary critics have ever discussed the rules and patterns of eloquence and the writings of a poetical or literary cast as well as the styles and attributes that bear a correlation with fluency and gracefulness but seldom have they recognised that it is really the sincerity and alutrism of a speaker or a writer which transmits vigour, freshness and sharpened sensibilities

to his compositions. If someone with a greater sense of realism and with an eye on the charm, effectiveness and cachet of the literary works were to attempt their re-classification, he would perhaps find them falling into two categories: one would be those expressions of inmost feelings and heartfelt realities which are written neither for worldly gain nor to display the command of language; the works falling in the other category would be those written to please one's ears or to find favour with the potentates which, unfortunately, makes their composers more of flatterers and artful courtiers than accomplished poets and litterateurs. He would find a world of difference between the two. One being an earnest craving of heart penetrates the heart of the readers and retains its fervidness and appeal for a long time to come. And if the writer happens to be a seeker after truth, fathoming the mysteries of mind and heart to establish the validity of real and eternal values of life, he leaves a deep and lasting impression on the heart of his readers. On the other hand, the writings of the other type, although receiving momentary applause of the readers for their flowers of eloquence and rhetoric ingenuities never make a durable impact upon their readers. The former follows a style simple and direct, concise and convincing while the latter is marred by florid and verbose style lacking pathos and feeling. The difference between the two has been succinctly brought out by someone in a parable. A hound was asked: "Why can't you catch up with the deer in your chase." "Because," replied the dog, "he runs for his life and I for my master."

Much in literature that is beautiful and sublime in thought and artistic in construction consists of the songs of the beauty of star-filled sky in the night, twinkling smile of the streams, the colours of the dawn and dusk and the gentleness of the morning breeze because these have ever elevated and inspired the imaginative feelings of man by providing inner composure, peace of mind and harmony of spirit. But the elevation of spirit attained through mystical experience and the state of ecstasy produced by absorption in the Absolute Being delivers oneself from

dependence on external stimuli required to awaken the fancy or imagination of the poet. Their hymn-tunes and love songs spring from the inner contentment of heart and swift flight of the spirit to the sublime heights of love-divine. Khwāja Mīr Dard, a famous Urdu poet, has alluded to the same reality in this verse :

Why go to tavern, O Dard, for the ruddy cup ;
With my heart intoxicated, I feel pretty puffed up.

So, this was the state of composure, penetrating consciousness, spiritual illumination and altruistic urge for the moral upliftment of others coupled with a command of language and refined aesthetic sense which made Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn a literary genius. He created an altogether new style, lucid and delightful, for the expression of his heartfelt realities and diffusion of virtues in his readers. In their vigour and effectiveness his letters are thus unmatched not only in Persian prose alone but in the entire Islamic literature.

Makhdūm's Letters and their Addresses

The most celebrated among the collection of Makhdūm's letters is the one published under the title of *Maktūbāt Hazrat Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī*, which is also known as *Maktūbāt Sadī* or *Seh Sadī Maktūbāt*. This collection contains one hundred letters addressed to Qāzī Shams ud-dīn of Chausa which were compiled by the chief disciple of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī, Sheikh Zain Badr ʿArabī. In his introduction to this collection Sheikh Zain Badr ʿArabī writes :

"Qāzī Shams ud-dīn of Chausa, a disciple of the Sheikh, made repeated requests in his letters to him that since he had to stay at a place far away from him and was precluded from attending his discourses, something to guide him on his journey of spirit might be committed into writing. The Qāzī implored Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī so earnestly that his petition ultimately met the approval of the Sheikh who started writing about the various stages and states undergone by the seekers after truth in their quest of the perfection of divine knowledge. It was

thus that numerous profound yet inscrutable details relating to spiritual contrition and effulgence, Unity of Godhead and knowledge of divine attributes, essence and dynamism of love, stages of attraction and endeavour, separation and isolation, blessings and blemish, preceptorship and discipleship along with the accounts of earlier precursors of the path of purity were put into writing. These letters were sent on different occasions during the year 747 A.H. from Bihar to the town of Chausa. Several attendants and inmates of the monastery kept copies of these letters and compiled them for the benefit of the seekers of spiritual purification."

Another slim volume of the letters of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī was also published under the title of *Maktūbāt-i-Jawābī* which was later incorporated in the *Maktūbāt-i-Seh Sadī* brought out from Lahore. This collection contains the letters, not published earlier, which were written in reply to the petitions submitted by Sheikh Muzaffar to solve the difficulties experienced by the travellers of the path of mysticism. These letters give us a glimpse of the higher reaches of intellectual and spiritual attainments of Sheikh Muzaffar who had made a will that these letters should be buried with him after his death. Fortunately, some of his disciples, who happened to read them got their copies made out. This collection contains 28 letters of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī.

There is yet a third collection of Makhdūm's letters containing 153 of them written to different persons between Jamada al Ūlā and Ramadhān of the year 769 A.H.

Subject Matter of the letters

Anybody who goes through these letters would not fail to realise that the splendid details and essence of realities not perceptible to the outward eye, expounded by Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī, are neither the fruits of his incisive intelligence nor could these be had by deep study or cultivation of knowledge, but could only be experienced by a heart in its loftiest stage of spiritual exaltation.

What Makhdūm says about the sublime majesty and excellence of Divine Being, His might and omnipotence, His beauty and perfection, the feelings of awe, hope and ardent love taking root in the heart of true believers and gnostics, the need for alternate states of effulgence and contrition experienced by the travellers of the mystic path and repentence on one's sin which opens the floodgates of Divine compassion point out that the writer, soaring in higher domains of spirituality, is familiar with the inner content of abstruse realities.

The exalted position occupied by man among the sentient beings, his lofty aspirations, his desire to achieve the impossible, his determination and firmness of mind, the grandeur and beauty of his heart and the unfathomable essence and nature of love described in a graceful and vigorous language by Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī deserves to be given a place in the finest production of human mind in all lands and ages.

Similarly, the unethical forms of natural propensities of human mind, his own self-deceptions and the ruses of Satan, transgressions that often take the shape and colour of vices and hinderances obstructing the path of the devotees expounded by Makhdūm speak of his keen observation and deep knowledge of practical ethics.

However, in order to fully appreciate the faults and dangers besetting the path of mystics and the warnings sounded by Makhdūm to avoid these pitfalls, his exhortation to follow the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* and the comprehensive treatment of the exalted position of prophethood *vis-a-vis* the state of saintship it would be necessary to understand the religious thought and different *sufī* systems of the time when these letters were written. Here we would be giving a few excerpts from the letters of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī dealing with some of the more important gnostic problems to acquaint the readers with the style and tenor of these letters.

VII

GOD
The Absolute Being

Describing the absolute will and authority of the Supreme Being, Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī refers to Quranic declaration: He will not be questioned as to That which He doeth,'[1] whereas man being accountable for every action of his 'they will be questioned.'[2] Everything belongs to God, explained Makhdūm, for there is nothing to which man can lay a claim. He may bestow whatever favours he desires on a man and debase whom He desires. He says that none can question the authority of God because whatever exists in the world 'is the bounty of Allah; which He giveth unto whom He will.'[3]

In a letter[4] he writes:

"Who has a right to raise the question why has God bestowed wealth and riches on one and not on others. We see a king appointing a man as his minister and another as his attendant or usher. Similarly, God favours one with wealth of faith, picks out a man from the path of vice or draws up a fellow out of the tyrants and wrongdoers, humble and the low. But who has the nerve to demand: 'Are these they whom Allah favoureth among

1. Q. XXI: 23
2. *Ibid*
3. Q. LXII: 4
4. Letter No. 3

us?'[1] He ordains to admit in his presence Fuzail ibn ᶜAyādh, a dreaded bandit, and directs Balᶜam Baᶜur[2] who sat on his prayer-mat for four hundred years to be turned out. He elevates ᶜUmar, the idol-worshipper, and debases ᶜAzāzīl, the adorer engaged in divine service for seven thousand years. Verily, 'He will not be questioned to that which He doeth.'[3]

"If He casts a benevolent glance on us, our errors shall turn into goodness, our imperfections into soundness and our ugliness into comeliness. O brother, a handful of earth was lying insignificant, trodden beneath the feet, but no sooner had He pity on it, an announcement was made with the flourish of trumpets: 'Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth.' "[4]

In another letter[5] he explains how lordly, imperious and unconcerned God is:

"Hark, O brother, and take a lesson. Pay attention to the distress of Adam, the lamentation of Noah, the pangs of Abraham and the wailing of Jacob. Behold Joseph being pushed into the well, Zachariah being sawed into two and John being put to sword. Recall to your mind the deep anguish and excruciating grief of Muhammad, on whom be peace and blessings, and recite the verse: "Everything will perish save His countenance."[6]

As for the sublime majesty of God, Makhdūm writes in another letter:

"My brother, see the light, for we can never gain access to His majestic court with these counterfeit coins. How can the

1. Q. VI: 53
2. Balᶜam of Cannanite race whose story is related in the Bible (Num. 22-24). The story does not find a place either in the Qur'ān or the Traditions but was adopted by the early exegetists. Balᶜam thus achieved a proverbial fame as a learned Israelite who was beguiled by the Satān.
3. Q. XXI: 23
4. Q. II: 30
5. Letter No. 36
6. Q. XXVIII: 88

fodder of a hawk be digested by the sparrow? How can the robe of honour meant for one great and exalted, fit in on our low-statured bodies?"[1]

But, as Makhdūm says, the magnificence and majesty of God inspires not only awe, wonder and reverence but also gives hope to the insignificant and down-trodden people; for, the generosity and kindness of God takes no time in raising the mean and ignoble to the highest pinnacle of fame and honour. To quote his words:

"This is the wealth to which nobody can prefer his claim: it can be had only through the benevolence of God. Were it to be claimed as a matter of right, then, I swear to God, you and I would never have got anything. But, His favour not being contingent on our entitlement, the profane and defiled can hope for His benevolence as much as the pious and pure of heart can do or even more than them. No wonder! He can make the throne of kings out of the heap of rubbish where dogs loiter. But God has, in His wisdom, appointed certain causes for every contingent. If you want to achieve something noble and great, you shall have to push forward daringly with the *Sharī*ʿ*ah* as your guide and Truth as your means, for your trait is profane and rebellious."[2]

The same point was elaborated by Makhdum in this letter.

"The benevolence of God depending entirely on His sweet-will, confers favour on one while His justice punishes another. He retrieved ʿUmar from the idol-temple to bless him but He left ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubai to be accursed within the mosque. A poet has spoken the very truth in this way:

Thou destroyeth one but knoweth how to renovate,
Whom thou redeemeth, Thou knoweth also to lay waste

"My brother, we have to do with an Absolute and All-powerful God. He is capable of turning the heaven into hell and the hel

1. Letter No. 41
2. Letter No. 50

into heaven; making a pantheon of the Kaʿaba and turning the Kaʿaba into a temple of idol-worshippers. Nothing makes any difference to Him. Who is it that is not stunned and stupefied by His awe-inspiring power? Therefore, be always awe-struck and terrified lest His chastisement appears as a bolt from the blue. His benignity is as independent of causation as his harshness. If He sometimes calls for a blasphemous sinner to wash off his sins and holds off a devoted and pious believer to let him taste the pangs of separation, He does it to let everybody know that His benevolence and severity both admit of no restraints at all. He occasionally causes a wicked tyrant to take care of a prophet and sometimes sets a prophet to look after an unworthy malefactor. He often makes a dog sit with the saints, and a saint to go to the dogs, but whosoever is approved by Him is never rejected and whosoever incurs His displeasure is doomed for ever."[1]

The unlimited authority of God is thus described in a letter by him.

"Always pin your faith in the beneficence and absolute authority of God. If He so wills, a thousand temples and churches would turn into Kaʿaba and Bait-ul-Muqaddas[2] and innumerable sinners and wrongdoers into pious believers and friends of God. No cause or force intervenes between His will and the effect desired by Him. He can cause tens of thousands of disbelievers to embrace Islam and turn polytheists into monotheists. He requires no time to convert the accursed mischief-makers into sanctified souls glorifying His name. But nobody has the heart to ask how does it all come to pass."[3]

In yet another letter he propounds the omnipotence of God in these words:

"He does what He likes: He never cares who is runied or saved. A man dies of thirst in a wilderness and says: 'How

1. Letter No. 59
2. The Dome of Rock in Jerusalem
3. Letter No. 72

many streams gush out to overflow but I am dying of thirst !' He immediately gets a reply from on High : 'We bring a thousand devotees to a dreadful forest and kill them all with the sword of Our will so that some of Our vultures and beasts may feast on their carrion. If anybody gives tongue to demand : 'Why for ?' He makes him tongue-tacked with the reply : 'He will not be questioned as to that which He doeth.'[1] The devotees are Ours, and so are the beasts and the birds. Why should one question in Our affairs?"[2]

In a letter Makhdūm tells the addressee that nobody knows what the wheel of fortune has in store for him. He might be saved or doomed as the possibilities of both exist evenly.

"My brother, your destination is long, long away, the path is unsafe, the object of your affection unattainable, your body is weak while your own heart, weakened and wasted, is excited by a passionate desire for the Beloved. A poet has said :

> No other prize Thou seeketh, save the life of lover,
> That's why few make bold to be Thy wooer.

"There are innumerable hearts thrilled and intoxicated by His love but their life-long endeavours, at the last moment, present the picture of what the Qur'ān depicts thus—'And We shall turn unto the work they did and make it scattered motes.'[3] And, in the hour of death, how many hearts apparently wrapped up in His love find from their Lord, 'that wherewith they never reckoned.'[4] How many faces turn in their graves from the side of *Qibla*[5], how many adorers are branded unamicable on the day they first meet the Truelove ; but many are there who are re-assured with the words : 'Sleep thou as a bride.' But, just the opposite, many are forewarned with the intimation 'Sleep thou as an ill-starred wretched.' And they are thus rejected never to

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1. Q. XXI : 23
2. Letter No. 56
3. Q. XXV : 23
4. Q. XXXIX : 47
5. The Ka'aba

be redeemed,—

One not fitted to consort with God,
Vicious then becomes his virtuous act!

"But there are also those whose every sin is pardoned.

The Redeemer effaces all evils from their hearts to bless,
Whom He makes undefiled by faults, pure and blameless.

"Behold, O brother, Khalīl[1] coming out of the pantheon and recite: 'He bringeth forth the living from the dead;[2] spot Cana'ān[3] deserting Noah and recall to your mind: 'He bringeth forth the dead from the Living.'[4] He raised Adam to the sublime heights from which he did not come down despite his transgression but He pulled down Iblīs[5] to those depths which rendered all his litanies and prayers valueless. 'There are glad tidings'[6] for some while others are threatened with the foreboding: 'On that Day there will be no glad tidings for the guilty.'[7] He gives hope to some with the words: 'The mark of them is on their foreheads from the traces of prostration'[8] and drives others to despair with the threat: 'The guilty will be known by their marks.'[9] A poet has truly said:

Don't be forgetful of your self like an ignorant dolt,
Earn some merit here before you give up the ghost.[10]

Makhdūm explains that God is both Severe as well as Forgiver, Unlimited and Unrestrained, just as the Divine Attributes are in their operation; both of these take effect

1. Abraham, the friend of God
2. Q. X: 31
3. Son of the Prophet Noah
4. Q. VI: 95
5. Satan
6. Q. XXXIX: 17
7. Q. XXV: 22
8. Q. XLVIII: 29
9. Q. LV: 41
10. Letter No. 77

simultaneously and independently with the result that a believer has ever to remain in a state of suspense between fear and fortitude, hope and despair. Referring to the Quranic verse "Doer of what He will",[1] Makhdūm throws light on the majestic might and absolute authority of God in these words:

"His benevolence often summons up a man to partake His grace; at times He turns the earth beneath the paws of a dog into collyrium for the eyes of the pious and the pure hearted. Sometimes He bestows an immortal fame on a dog by saying thus: 'their dog stretching out his paws on the threshold'[2]; at times His wrath warns us that this is the place where the teacher of angels worshipping Him for seven hundred thousand years was made accursed in the twinkling of an eye; He calls for the idol-worshipper ʿUmar to make him a bosom friend; not seldom He turns away a Balʿam Baʿur endowed with Divine knowledge, from the temple and then 'his likeness is as the likeness of a dog, if thou attackest him he panteth with his tongue out and if thou leavest him he panteth with his tongue out.'[3] At times He receives one with the most distinguished marks of honour, deputes a thousand angels of light to receive His guest and bestows on His friend treasures unbounded, but oftentimes He turns back the beggar empty handed; sometimes one is made to grace the Heaven of heavens, but often He allows not one to remain standing at His threshold. Knowledge and reason are dumbfounded here and saints and devotees are things of naught; here is the sally of 'Doer of what He will,'[4] and the effulgence of the Supreme Power. He does whatever He wills and decides whatever He desires."[5]

Grace and Mercy of God

Makhdūm describes the might and lordly command of God

1. Q. LXXXV: 16
2. Q. XVIII: 18
3. Q. VII: 176
4. Q. LXXXV: 16
5. Letter No. 78

so vividly that it makes one's blood run cold. But, following in the footsteps of the prophets of God who come not merely to threaten but also to comfort and console lest the mankind gets frightened and loses its heart, he gives words to portray the tenderness and mercy of the Creator with the same vigour and effectiveness. If Makhdūm tells his disciples, on the one hand, how immeasurably and eternally exalted God is, in the totality of His omnipotent and omnipresent attributes, acknowledging no rule, standard, or limit, save His own sole and absolute will, to whom belongs the domain, and the excellency, and the power and the might; he also explains to them, on the other, the mercy, and the bounty, and the all compassing munificence of the Creator and Sustainer Who declares "My mercy embraceth all things,"[1] and consoles the afflicted with the revelation: "O My slaves who have been prodigal to their own heart! Despair not of the mercy of Allah, Who forgiveth all sins. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful."[2]

In a letter Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī thus defines the Divine attribute of mercy:

"O my brother, when the encircling wave of Allah's mercy surges forth it washes away all the sins and vices of His slaves. Then all their failings turn into goodness for the vileness and baseness of man are transient while the mercy of God is enduring, eternal. How can a thing fleeting and unenduring hold its own against that which is infinite and everlasting. Verily, the sole cheerful expectation of man, a speck of mortal dust, lies in the compassion of God. What else is there, besides the benevolence of God, to produce a glimmer of hope in man sunk in vice and corruption? How many demoralised and debased a soul is there whose face has been blackened by the infirmity of his own base desires and predilections, but the harbinger of Divine mercy suddenly appears to announce that the Eternal Dispenser conveys His greetings and desires to

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1. Q. VII: 156
2. Q. XXXIX: 53

converse with thee."[1]

Invitation to All

Makhdūm held out hope to those whom he addressed his epistles, encouraged them to reform themselves and partake in the Divine bounty as if it were a repast for all and sundry, a free and public pothouse where everyone could go and slake his thirst. He told them that there was absolutely no question of anybody being turned back, denied and dejected, for the Eternal Beloved Himself removes the veil from the heart of a seeker after truth and draws him near. Had it not been so, argues Makhdūm, then how a created and contingent being, ignorant and transgressing, could approach that perfection of Beauty free from every limitation and blemish for 'Naught is as His likeness.'[2]

Here is a letter in which Makhdūm describes the unbounded bounty of God in words of lasting beauty.

"The doors of His generosity are wide open. It is a banquet for one and all. Hurry up, come and get it ! Brother, how much of His bounty can a man take in, whereas His unlimited bounty allows neither the master nor the slave, neither the rich nor the poor to remain deprived. The glorious lamp of the Heaven rises everyday, but the entire human race cannot grab a particle of its rays. Still, it lights up the palaces of kings and grandees as it shines upon the sheds and cribs of the beggars. Never mind about man, the conglomeration of water and dust, but have your eyes fixed on the loving grace of God who says : 'He loveth him who loves Him,'[3] 'Allah is the Protecting Friend of those who love Him'[4] and He promises to reward His servants thus : 'Your endeavour (upon earth) has found acceptance.'[5] This is a distinction not enjoyed even by

1. Letter No. 56
2. Q. XLII : 12
3. Q. V : 54
4. Q. II : 257
5. Q. LXXVI : 21

the angels. The heavenly hosts are nearer to God, impeccable, celestial and holy and are ever engaged in the glorification of God but the blushing honour bestowed on man is something quite different."

Divine Mercy

Makhdūm invites attention towards the benignity, graciousness and clemency of God which is ever at the look out to do the highest possible good to the offenders. He says that no matter how grievous one's sins may be, a sincere repentance and complete turning away from the sin would let him pass without any resentment, blame or punishment. He cites the example of those irredeemable sinners who were pardoned by divine favour in a trice, their sinfulness was changed into virtuousness and they became the fount whence honour springs. Makhdūm reminds that howsoever numerous one's besetting sins, faults and failings may be, the grace and mercy of God is limitless and embraces all things, great and small.

In a letter he shows the ways of Divine mercy.

"Howsoever sunk in corruption you might be, my brother, repent on your sins and become eligible for the grace of God. You are not steeped in iniquity more than the wizards of Pharaoh nor are you filthier than the dog of the companions of the cave; neither have you a heart more stony than the rocks of Mount Sīnāi[1] nor are you more worthless than the Hunnānah.[2] A niggar is brought from Abyssinia to be sold as a slave, but who can object if his master calls him Kāfūr.[3]

1. Mount Sina (Sinai) on which God gave Tablets of Law to Prophet Moses.
2. The log supporting the thatched roof of the Prophets' mosque The Prophet used to lean on it while delivering the Friday sermons. After the pulpit was erected in the mosque and the Prophet began delivering sermons therefrom, the log was heard making a cracking sound as if wailing in separation.
3. *Lit.* Camphor, meaning white. One, Kāfūr Akhshīdī, Abyssinian by race, was the ruler of Egypt. The famous Arab poet, Mutannabi, was his poet-laureate.

When the angels said to the Lord, 'We do not have strength to vie with this man made of clay in spreading corruption on earth'; the Lord replied, 'Reject him, if We send him to your threshold; don't purchase if We ever sell him to you. Do you fear that his corruption would exceed Our mercy or that his iniquity shall stain Our perfection? This is the lump of clay whom We have exalted and blessed with Our grace. What have We to lose by his vileness."[1]

Repentance

The sorrow for one's sins with self-condemnation implies a change in conduct and helps in the upward ascent of spirit. The essential conditions for such a repentance have been explained in a letter by Makhdūm quoted here.

"The *ba'it* entails repentance over one's sins expressed by the disciple before his spiritual guide. In the language of mystics this is called *gardish* or detour which signifies a change in the position of the person doing penance, for it takes him from pollution to purity, from profanity to sanctity; if turns the pantheon of his heart into a mosque; elevates him from a brute to a human being; transforms him from worthless dust to gold; takes him from darkness to light; and then, the glorious lamp of faith illuminates his heart and Islam or surrender to God guides him on the path of Divine gnosis."[2]

1. Letter No. 2
2. Letter No. 29

VIII

Dignity of Man

A considerable part of the letters of Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī, exhibiting a masterly blend of vigour and flexibility, poetic emotion and matter-of-fact description, re-state the truth of human dignity, the richness and sublimity of human heart and the swift flight of spirit to its source attained through dynamic love of man for the Ultimate Truth.

The poetic creations of Hakīm Sanāī', Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn ᶜAttār and Maulānā Jalāl ud-dīn Rūmī have, undoubtedly, sung of the nobility of man, but, in Persian prose, the letters of Makhdūm occupy a singular pre-eminence by virtue of their style, the manner of presentation and vivifying elements of confidence and trust in the worth and dignity of man. They sound a new note, inspire man with expectation and courage and open new vistas of vision to the lofty heights attainable by human spirit. These racy and sparkling essays contradict the pessimistic view in regard to humanity unfortunately propagated by most of the then mystics through their misguided interpretation of *fanā* or annihilation of the self. To these mystics the life of man was a vale of tears, another name of vain expectations from which one ought to seek refuge through total affacement of the self itself, which was lying and crafty, deceitful and fiendish. The self of man had thus come to be regarded as the greatest stumbling block in the way of man's spiritual development. Such a pessimistic view of humanity had shaken the faith

of man in himself who, ashamed of his own existence, had begun to look upon the celestial beings as the shining examples or models of spiritual ascent. He had forgotten that it was Adam, the progenitor of man, and not an angel, before whom these heavenly creations had been made to bow down low.

It was to contradict these ill-conceived notions, to dispel this surrounding gloom, that Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī gave his clarion call to re-affirm man's nobility and eminence, his deputyship of God and the love and confidence reposed in him by the Lord and Creator of the universe. Makhdūm repeatedly emphasised this point in his letters, in different ways and on different occasions, to restore confidence and hope in human destiny which incites man to construct new dreams and to aim for higher achievements.

Man, the Favourite of God

In a letter writes Makhdūm:

"The creations of God are many and varied, but none finds favour in the eyes of God like this clod of dust blended with water. When God willed to create man out of clay, whom He desired to crown with his vicegerency, the angels said: 'Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood?'[1] The reply received by the angels was meant to convey that ardent love needs no advice for love and precaution never get together. The reply, given by God dropped the hint: Of what use is your prayer and glorification, if not acceptable to Us? What is the harm done by the sins if Our grace wipes out the slate clean? We have already ordained: 'Allah will change their evil deeds to good deeds.'[2] 'Surely', said God to the angels, 'you betake the right path while they can go astray but whenever We shall desire Our mercy shall unfold the path of virtue for them and blot out the signs of transgression from their faces! You very well know that We are the object of their

1. Q. II: 30
2. Q. XXV: 70

passionate yearning, but what you do not know is that We also love them!

"A poet has correctly said:

Dear to One's heart, when commits a mistake,
A thousand commendations his virtues make."[1]

Trustees of Divine Love

"Other sentient beings," says Makhdūm in another letter, "have hardly anything to do with love-divine, for they do not possess an aspiration so high and noble (as you do). You see the celestial beings treading always the same beaten track because the message of love is not meant for them. But, if man has a hard road to travel it is because he plunges into love. Thus, whosoever happens to have a taste of love, he ought to bid good-bye to his own self for love does not put up with anything save itself.

O love, thou hast made a drunkard of me,
Secure I was, rolling in the lap of luxury.

"When the star of Adam's good fortune rose high, the entire universe was all a flutter; some complained that their prayers of countless years have been overlooked and a clod of earth exalted over them. Then, came the reply: "Never mind the clay he is made of, cast your eyes upon the essence of love infused in him: for, 'He loveth who love Him.' "[2] This is our command and his heart is glowing with the fervour of love."[3]

In yet another letter Makhdūm unfolds the romance of man's glory in this manner.

"God created eighteen thousand worlds but each one of them remained indifferent to the yearning of love, nor did anyone of them ever try to get even a fraction of it; wherefore man alone could lay a claim to this wealth. All the other creations remained unblest with this glory. And that is why someone has

1. 36th letter
2. Q. V: 54
3. 46th letter

said:

> Thou art highest of the high and lowest of the low;
> Not a creation is there on even terms with Thee."[1]

Purpose of Creation

The distinction accorded to man, explains Makhdūm, is because he is the purport and aim of the creation of entire universe. For man is the centre of all creations, the tender affection of love and devotion reflects his worthiness.

"This clod of earth is not less distinguished. nor is Adam and his progeny less dignified, my brother. The Empyrean and the Throne, the Tablet and the Pen, the heaven and the earth were all created for his sake. As Sheikh Abū ʿAlī has said God nominated Adam as his deputy,[2] chose Abraham for His friend,[3] selected Moses for Himself[4] and announced the glad tidings of 'He loveth who love Him,[5] to the believers. Verily, the heart of man would have been listless and man himself like the rest of mute creation if this spiritual affinity had not been an indwelling attribute of his nature."[6]

Responsibility of Faith

The nobility and greatness of man and the distinction enjoyed by him is because he agreed to assume the Divine Trust. The heavens and the earth and the hills shrank from bearing the Divine Trust but man, ignorant and transgressor, agreed to shoulder the burden although he was feeble and weak. He was foolish enough to think that being no more than a speck of dust, he had nothing to lose if he was unable to prove equal to the Trust reposed in him. To what lower depth could he be scaled down if he failed, so he thought. Endowed with courage and

1. 59th letter
2. Q. II: 30
3. Q. IV: 125
4. Q. XX: 41
5. Q. V: 54
6. XX: 41

self-respect he is still exclaiming: "Is there any more to come."[1]

Makhdūm throws light on the exalted position enjoyed by man over all other beings and creations in a letter in his forceful and impressive style "Glorified is this lump of earth and high are his aspirations although humble and miserable he is in his composition. When the offer of Divine Trust was thundered forth, the celestial beings engaged in glorification of God for seven hundred thousand years and raising the slogan—'We hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee'[2]—'refused to bear that burden.'[3] The sky prided in its lofty height; the earth pleaded that dust was its garment; the mountain made the plea that it stood as a watchman, firm and stable; the jewels expressed the fear of losing their lustre and brilliance; but, the ignorant speck of dust stretched forth its hands submissively and took the Divine Trust to its heart. It feared not anything like the heavens and earth, for, what had the lowest of the low to lose in taking that risk. Anything debased and degraded, so it thought, is thrown in the dust, but how the dust can be put to shame? It stepped ahead undaunted and undertook the burden unbearable to the seven heavens and earth and yelled with delight: 'Is there any more to come?"[4]

Glory of the Dust

Now listen to what Makhdūm says about the glory of man.

"Never belittle the clod of dust and the drop of water that maketh a man, for whatever is there in the world comes out of the two; whatever you see here proceeds from earth and water; and whatever you find here besides these is a figment of your imagination. As they say, the love took wings from its home

1. Q. L: 30
2. Q. II: 30
3. Q. XXXIII: 72
4. 49th letter

of honour, saw the empyrean, sublime and exalted, and passed by it; crossed the Throne, splendid and magnificent; forded the sky, elevated and towering; then it came down to the earth which was plunged in toil and trouble and descended to make its nest there."[1]

A gnostic poet has made an immortal verse of the same idea in these words:

> Heaven or earth, what can suffice Thy vastness?
> My heart alone can accommodate Thy goodly precious.

In one of his letters Makhdūm spells out the distinctive place occupied by man in the eyes of his Creater.

"O brother, man has been specially favoured by the Lord. It is related that when the Angel of Death is deputed to carry off the soul of any believer, he is instructed first to convey the greetings of God and then take his soul away. You would have read in the Qur'ān that 'the word from a Merciful Lord (for them) is Peace'[2] on the Day of Reckoning. In truth, there is no deity except Allah, the Everliving, and so is His word and His greeting. Had not the condescending favour of God been conferred on man on the day he was created, he would not have been accosted with salutation at his first meeting."[3]

Man, the Confidant of Divine Secrets

But, why has man been allowed to occupy the most distinguished place of honour? The reply given by Makhdūm to this question is:

"Of all the beings inhabiting eighteen thousand worlds created by God, none was bestowed an ambition higher than that of man; no other being was told: 'I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit;'[4] no apostle was raised

1. 50th letter
2. Q. XXXVI : 58
3. 51st letter
4. Q. XXXVIII : 72

from amongst any other creature; nor a book conferred on one; nor yet God sent His salutation on any one of them. It was man alone whose ardent love made the pangs of separation unbearable for him and that is why his heart was allowed to subsist by the Essence of Divine Beauty in this world and permitted to behold Him in the next. Man has nothing dearer to his heart than the love of God in this world and no other longing than to witness His radiant countenance unveiled in the world to come. This is the lesson man has learnt from the Quranic verse: 'The eye turned not aside nor yet was overbold.'[1] "[2]

Man, Superior to Angels

"It was assuredly much too precious," writes Makhdūm, "that made the angels prostrate before man—the creature envied by the heavens. Howsoever ignoble and earth-born a man may appear to be, he is so holy and consecrated in his essential nature that neither the celestial intelligence nor human reason is capable of plumbing his secrets. When the lustre of his true being radiates, the angels are bewildered and the heavens dumfounded. He is modest and meek yet others are terror-smitten with his awe.

If thy essence, the angels were to behold;
Prostrating would they arrive at Thy threshold."[3]

The Cognizant Heart

Makhdūm maintains that the value, excellence and superiority of man springs from his heart which is the abode of invaluable wealth bestowed on him. In a letter he wrote of the human heart:

"The Lord created the empyrean and committed it to the care of heavenly hosts; fashioned the paradise and appointed

1. Q. LIII: 17
2. 53rd letter
3. 58th letter

Rizwān[1] to guard it; made the hell and deputed Mālik[2] to keep watch over it; but when He chiselled the heart of the believer, He came out with the announcement: 'his heart is between the two fingers of the Most Merciful.''[3]

Here is another letter written by Makhdūm Yahyā Maneri throwing light on the worth of this admirable gift of God. "Had there been anything more worthy and precious than the heart of man, then God would have assuredly laid the jewel of His gnosis in that. A Tradition of the Prophet speaking of God's will says: 'Neither My heavens can contain Me nor My earth; but if anywhere there is room for Me, it is the heart of a believer.' Heavens are unable to store up the perfection of Divine knowledge and the earth is incapable of bearing its burden. Thus, the heart of the believer can alone bear this heavy charge. A stud could carry a man like Rustam but when the sun of Divine Radiance shines over a mountain, than which there is nothing more massive and solidly pitched in the earth, 'it comes crashing down'[4] below. But this very sun of eternal Beauty shines day in and day out on the heart of the believer who raps out the cry: "Is there any more to come'[5] and greedily seeks still more of it, to quench his unqcenchable thirst."[6]

The Broken-Hearted

Whatever is broken into pieces becomes valueless, but a disconsolate and broken heart is the only exception; for, it becomes more precious in the eyes of its Creator. Makhdūm expounds this truth in these words:

"Ah brother, breakage renders everything worthless but a heart becomes more valuable if it is more melancholy and broken. Moses once whispered: 'Where should I seek Thee.'

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1 Name of the angel guarding the Paradise

2 Angel guarding the Hell

3 43rd letter

4. Q. VII: 143

5. Q. L: 30

6. Q. 38th letter

'With those,' came the reply, 'whose hearts are rent for my sake.' "[1]

Realm of Love

The most precious wealth a heart possesses is love—a love that encompasses all the spheres and states and whose authority extends over this world as much as over the next. Makhdūm vividly describes how love signifies the highest reach of mankind.

"Love enwraps the entire duration of time, the past, present and future. It encircles the first and the last, whence and whither. A gnostic has said that this world as well as the world beyond are for preferring a demand. If some one asserts that the other world is not meant for demanding he is absolutely wrong. Certainly there would not be fasting and prayer in the world to come but one would beseach God for things still higher and nobler. On the Day of Judgement the Law will be abrogated, no doubt, but, the two things—Love for God and Praise of God—shall ever remain."[2]

1. 6th letter
2. 46th letter

IX

Intuitive Insight

The letters of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī shed light on some of the most intricate problems and highest manifestations of intuitive religious perception experienced by highly evolved and elevated, sensitive and self-conscious souls. The gnostic imagery and mystical truths vividly described at different places and in different contexts in these letters bear an eloquent testimony to the higher plane of consciousness attained by Makhdūm through prayer and penance and his researches into the inner content of religious experience as also his endeavour to combine speculative reason with the intuitive experience. These indescribable truths given forms of expression by Makhdūm so enchant and evoke rapturous joy as a few poetical compositions or elegantly written tracts can claim to produce.

Unity of Manifestation

The writings of Makhdūm contain certain concepts and doctrines which are generally believed to have been articulated a few centuries after him. One such mystical doctrine known as Unity of Manifestation (*Wahdat-us-Shahūd*), was propagated in the eleventh century of the Islamic era by Mujaddid Alf Thānī to contradict the then prevalent concept of Unity of Being (*Wahdatul Wajūd*). It is true that Mujaddid Alf Thānī was *par excellence* the greatest exponent of the doctrine of the Unity of Manifestation but one is surprised to see that Makhdūm Yahyā

Manerī, too, had clearly delineated the fundamental position of this concept about two and a half centuries before it was revived by the Mujaddid Makhdūm has explicitly stated in his letters, in the light of his personal religious experiences and intuitive knowledge, that what was commonly known by Unity of Being or annihilation of every created being in the Divine Essence was really no more than a state of eclipse of other beings and objects in the presence of Divine light exactly in the same way as the dim light of the stars is deprived of its brilliance before the luminuous lamp of the sun. He succinctly describes the process by pointing out that the extinction of any object is altogether different from its becoming invisible. He explains that the tenuity and evasiveness of the immanentist feeling deludes many an elevated soul in the ecstatic state of Divine effulgence unless grace of God and guidance of an illuminated teacher give shoulder to lead him on the right path.

"The effulgence of Divine Essence is so manifested before the traveller of spirit that its radiance blots out every other object and being from his view. The tiny particles of dust are put out of sight in the light of the sun but it does not mean that these particles become extinct or get absorbed in the sun. What it actually means is that these minute atoms cover up their faces in shame before the luminuous lamp of heaven. Man never becomes God for God is Exalted, Glorious and Great. Nor is ever a created being swallowed up, incorporated or united with the Divine Essence. Becoming extinct is quite different from being invisible. A gnostic poet has lent articulation to this truth in these words.

For the Eternal One nothing is old or new;
All others are insignificant, He is that He is.

"When you look into a mirror, you get absorbed in the reflection of your own self and forget the mirror : then you do not aver that the mirror has become extinct or that it has turned into your reflection or that your reflection has melted into mirror. This is the substance of annihilation in Divine Oneness which manifests itself in a like manner

He talks funny who speaks of it, but does not know
To set a limit between one's annihilation and His refulgent glow.

"This is the tenuous path where many have slipped. No traveller of spirit can forge ahead unless the grace of God and the guidance of an elevated mentor, who had himself waded through the billows' rage of this furrowed sea, help him to find out his way."[1]

Transformation of Attributes Alone

Here it might be contended that a lamp brought before the sun loses its lustre so completely that its existence becomes merely illusory; for, nothing can be existent and nonexistent both at one and the same time. Makhdūm says that such a contention is not correct because the transformation undergone by the lamp is of attribute and not of essence. He writes in a letter:

"Some say that when the sun shines the lamp practically loses its entity: the sun is then the only reality that exists. What is the use of a lamp, they say, which melts into nought, for its entity and light rest on an even keel. If anybody contends that the existence and non-existence are each other's antithesis and the two cannot be found at one and the same time, then he ought to know that we are talking about the attributes and not about the essence. The essence does not undergo a change but the attribute does. The sun shines over a stream and warms its water. Its quality is changed but not its nature; the rays of sun act on the attribute and not on the essence. There is no contradiction at all in it."[2]

Upward Ascent of Spirit

The spiritual ascent of those who have attained the pinnacle remains, quite often, hidden from their companions and friends.

1. 1st letter
2. 86th letter

The prophets of God and such of the illuminated souls who have reached the stage of Acquaintance, are gifted with courage, endurance and a soaring ambition. They neither whirl nor shout, nor yet they work miracles or lay a claim to it. They always try to conceal their attainments from the public gaze.

Makhdūm writes in a letter that the higher is this upward progress of spirit, the less it is noticed by the people around the mystic.

"The faster the speed, the more its movement becomes imperceptible. Don't you see that when the stone of the windmill gains speed, it appears that the mill is not working. Somebody asked Junaid Baghdādī: 'Why don't you stir during the musical recitations?' In reply he recited the verse from the Qur'ān: 'And (O Man), thou shalt see the mountains, which thou thinkest are fixed firmly, shall float (in the air) even as clouds.'[1] You cannot see swift speed. When it goes ahead at full speed, it cannot be seen. Often the zephyr moves so gently that nobody notices its speed."[2]

Control of Carnal Desires

The development of character and spirit, according to some, depends on complete extinction of carnal desires. This, says Makhdūm, is not correct. He holds that the aim should not be to stamp out the desires of flesh but to put bridle on them. Ghazālī too has explained, in *Ihyā'-ul-Uloom*, that the reformation of a man does not require complete suppression of vices like anger, malice etc. but in subduing these natural propensities and holding them in leash. Makhdūm's treatment of the subject is inspiring and creates a profound impression on the readers. He writes in a letter:

"He is an ignoramus and dotard who considers that the *Sharī'ah* demands smothering of the carnal appetites and natural instincts of man. He has not given thought to what the Prophet

1. Q. XXVII: 88
2. 4th letter

said: 'I am a man and sometimes I get angry.' Sometimes his indignation became apparent on his face. That is why God loves those who 'control their wrath'[1] and not those who do not possess that emotion at all. How can the *Sharī'ah* demand extinction of sexual desire when the Prophet contracted nine marriages. If some one has lost his sex-urge, he ought to take medical treatment so that this natural instinct is restored. For the loving care of one's family members and children, anger over the enemies of God in fighting against them and preservation and propagation of one's race spring from the natural instincts man possesses, even the apostles of God have shown eagerness for these. Thy longed to have their line of progeny unbroken. The *Sharī'ah* only demands that these instincts should be kept under strict command of the Law. A hunter needs a steed and a well-trained dog which go after the chase on his bidding. The horse, if untrained, will throw away the rider and the wild dog will pounce at him. It is thus essential that the horse and the dog should he well-trained for hunting. So are the instincts of sex and anger needed for capturing the rewards of Hereafter. But, your aids should be under your control; for if they gain a control over you, your ruin is inevitable. That is why prayer and penance seek to bring these under one's command."[2]

The Idol of Miracles

It has been stated elsewhere that the working of miracles by the saints had become so popular during the time of Makhdūm that it had come to be regarded as an indisputable evidence of one's piety and sainthood. However, Makhdūm maintained that indulgence of certain mystics in preternatural acts constituted a veil and signified their interest in objects other than those leading to Divine propinquity. It was also an idol, in his view, which required to be rejected and given up

1. Q. III: 134
2. Q. 40th letter

altogether, if need be, for the health of soul.

"The working of miracles," writes Makhdūm in letter, "is nothing short of idolatry. The unbelievers worshipping idols deny the overlordship of God but no sooner do they give them up and make a public announcement of their rejection of idols, they turn into His friends. So is the miraculous power wielded by a gnostic: his journey of spirit gets beclouded and suspended if he is satisfied with wonder working; but, if he gives it up he is elevated and rewarded with nearness. As a gnostic poet has said:

Their gaze fixed on the heaven, the pious are;
Smacking their lips in the lock-up, the lovers are.
His mercy is for all, noble and laity, good and bad,
Bold and intrepid one has to be, to bear his wrath.

"This is the reason why when God bestows miraculous powers on an elevated soul, he becomes more God-fearing and humble. He becomes unpretentious, meek and yielding and inculcates a greater awe of God."

Ill-disposed Miraculous Powers

"It is possible," says Makhdūm, "that the secret truths revealed to certain God-moved souls through Divine grace or penetrating intellect or prognostication of coming events may be denied to some men of God, but that does not signify any defect in the eminence of spiritual attainment of the latter group. Defect or fault lies in deviation from the right path. The secrets revealed to the blessed ones increase their faith, strengthen their virtues and morals and lead them to glorification of the Lord. But if such preternatural powers are enjoyed by a man who transgresses the injunctions of the *Sharīʿah*, then, in very truth, they become the means of leading him afar from the path of virtue. He is then deluded and befooled for he begins to regard others as his inferiors and underlings. At times he even forsakes Islam and starts denying the limits set by

1. 8th letter

God for the permissible and prohibited, lawful and unlawful. He begins to consider recollection of God as the only way of His glorification and discards the way of the Prophet, and this ultimately leads him to infidelity and apostasy."[1]

Social Service

Explaining the merits of social service Makhdūm writes in a letter :

"Rendering social service is highly meritorious for the seeker after truth, for, it helps to inculcate those virtues which cannot be produced by any other form of litany and prayer. It deadens the love of self, expels pride and vanity, produces modesty and humbleness, beautifies the morals, teaches one to follow the path of the Prophet and that of the blessed mystics, elevates the spirit and illuminates his ego from within and without. These are the ennobling gifts of service. Once a seer was asked : 'How many ways are there to attain fellowship of God ?.' 'As many as the atoms this world contains,' replied he, 'but none more straight and easier than consoling the broken-hearted. I have attained God through this way and I bid my followers to do the same.' There are others, too, whose devotions to God attain a higher virtue because of their selfless service to their fellow beings."[2]

Criterian for Self-purification

The criterion for self-purification prescribed by the mystics is sufficiently high. In fact, it is so high that one can never be sure whether all vestiges of self-conceit, earthly desires and sex-appetite have been completely eradicated from one's self. One can never confidently claim to have reached that stage of self-purification where one's spiritual ascent takes wing unfettered by his base desires. However, in Makhdūm's view, a man reaches the desired stage of self-purification when he gives up

1. 96th letter
2. 71st letter

acting according to his own predilections and wishes and begins to pursue, in all seriousness, the path chalked out by the *Sharī'ah*. In the letter quoted here Makhdūm sets forth the essential requisites for self-purification.

"My brother, the Self of man is deceitful and treacherous. It always boasts and brags and makes false claims. It always advertises that it has put a bridle on its cravings and appetites, but it ought to be asked to furnish the proof of its claim. And the only evidence sufficing to establish its claim is that it does not take a step of its own but acts according to the injunctions of the Law. It is truthful, if it acts zestfully on injunctions of the *Sharī'ah*, but if it avails of the leave or interprets the Law to suit its longings, it is assuredly a blasted slave of its desires. If it is a helot of anger, it is a dog in the garb of man; if it is a serf of its appetite, it is a beast; if it is a captive of its despicable desires, it is a greedy hog; if it is enthralled by style and taste, it is effeminate. But the man who adorns his Self with the compliance of the *Sharī'ah*, puts it to test from time to time, gives the reins of his desires in the hands of the Law and moulds himself in its cast, then alone can he claim to have gained control over his Self, its propensities and inclinations. To that end only prudent and sagacious men, enlightened with the core of truth, bridle their Self with the chains of righteousness and fear of God."[1]

1. 96th letter

X

Defence of Faith

It was undoubtedly a great achievement of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī that he guided a large number of people on the path of God, purified and animated their spirits, created a longing in their hearts for attaining the knowledge of Divine Being, lit the flame of love-Divine in them and expounded the intricate and subtle realities of intuitive experience in an elegant, moving and heart-warming diction like other great reformers and renovators of the faith. But this was not all. He protected the purity of faith as the earlier revivalists and defenders had done, against the antinomian tendencies and pantheistic monism imported by misguided *sūfī* cults which eluded every effort to tie them down by the classifications and definitions of the *Sharī'ah*. He also endeavoured to eradicate the influence of Batinite and philosophical concepts imbibed and propagated through neo-Platonist pursuits of religious experience. In a country, like India, where the people did not have a direct access to the Divine revelation and the Traditions of the Prophet, the rapidly growing popularity of the heterodox belief and practices had sharpened the conflict between them and the sound and puritanical faith of Islam. Makhdūm's letters refuted, in a peculiarly vivid and direct way, this incredible confusion, multiplicity, and often absurdity of ideas. He fell back on the Scripture and the *Sunnah* and rejected all intellectual constructions and intuitive subtleties which came in

conflict with the authorised interpretation of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. He also balanced and corrected the intuitive imagination and mystical experience of his time by accommodating these in the framework of fundamental religious attitudes. This was made possible solely because of his own spiritual insight gained through personal ecstatic experiences and illuminations which made him not only an exponent of mysticism but also an authority on the subject whose interpretations and experiences could not be brushed aside by other mystics.

Prophethood and Sainthood

An erratic concept prevalent for quite a long time among the then mystics was that sainthood occupies a place more exalted and sublime than prophethood: the saints being always attracted to Divine perfection severed all relationship with the world and sentient beings around them while the prophets' mission being to propagate and expound the revealed truth, the latter had, very often, to remain in contact with their fellow beings. And, since, the fellowship of God was a task more consecrated than the fellowship of human beings, the saints held a more elevated and hollowed place than the prophets did. Some other mystics, however, made a distinction between the two states of the prophets when they were absorbed in Divine propinquity and when they were busy disseminating the divine message among their fellow beings, and thereby concluded that the prophets in their former occupation enjoyed a higher position than when they performed the function of their ministry. Even this view signified an inferior position of the prophethood and its mission by assigning a more exalted status to the engrossment in Divine Being, the chief pursuit of the saints.

Thus, however interpreted, this blasphemous proposition was derogatory to prophethood and involved impairment of that exalted office besides paving the way to agnostic and irreligious way of thinking. With characteristic vividness and vigour of his writings and discourses, Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī

set in to give the lie to the nonconformist belief of the mystics and established, through his clear and logical reasoning, that the prophethood, in all its states and stages, was infinitely higher than sainthood. He demonstrated that the shortest span of prophetic existence, a single breath of any prophet, was decidedly more blessed and sacred than a whole life-time spent in the state of saintliness. The arguments brought forth by Makhdūm to clinch his point were drawn more from the higher reaches of his ecstatic illuminations than cold and logical formulations of discursive reason.

Makhdūm writes in reply to a letter wherein Shams ud-dīn had sought a clarification in regard to the position of prophethood.

"Shams ud-dīn, my dear brother, you ought to know that there is a consensus of opinion among all the mystics treading the path of spirituality that the saints, in all states and stations, are subordinate to the prophets who are always superior to the saints. What is incumbent on the saints to translate into action is the guidance vouchsafed by the apostles of God. All the prophets are saints, but no saint can claim the honour of being a prophet. There is not the least difference of opinion in this regard among the doctors of divinity bearing allegiance to the way of *Ahl-i-Sunnat Wal-Jamā*ʿ*at*. A sect among the renegades, however, claims that the saints surpass the prophets on the ground that the latter are ever engrossed in effulgence of the Transcendent Being while the prophets are busy ever and anon in the pursuit of their mission of preaching the message of God to the human beings. Thus, they argue that a man who is totally effaced and lost in beholding the Beauty of the Lord takes precedence over one who seldom engages his mind in contemplating the presence of God. Another group which venerates the saints and claims to be their followers goes even further to assert that the saints are higher-up than the prophets for the reason that former are initiated into the divine mysteries whereas the latter have access only to the knowledge revealed to them. They infer from it that the saints are acquainted with

the secrets not known to the prophets. They avouch that the saints have intuitive knowledge not possessed by the prophets. They draw this inference from the story of Moses and Khidhr and assert that Khidhr was a saint and Moses a prophet, who got revelations from the Lord. The latter was unable to fathom the secret of any mysterious event unless a revelation descended from on High. But, Khidhr the saint, endowed with intuitive knowledge could immediately plumb the secret of every mystery in as much as Moses had to submit himself as a disciple of Khidhr. This, they say, clearly proves their point, for, a disciple is always an underling of the mentor......But one should never lose sight of the fact that all the precursors of righteous path of religion, on whom reliance can be placed, have vehemently protested against such sacrilegious creeds and ideas. They have never accepted this profane doctrine that any saint can ever excel or even be a match to a prophet of God. As for the story of Moses and Khidhr, the latter was granted a momentary primacy by virtue of his intuitive knowledge on a particular occasion while Moses enjoyed an enduring paramountcy and, as you know, abiding supremacy cannot be overshadowed by a passing pre-eminence. Take Mary, for instance, who was granted a temporary ascendancy over other women because of the birth of her child without being touched by a man, but this temporary advantage could not eclipse the perdurable superiority of ʿAyesha and Fātima and their illimitable supremacy over all women for all times to come. Hark ye! my brother, the entire life spent in litanies and prayers, transports and illuminations by all the saints of all times shall come short of a step taken by a prophet. What the saints endeavour to achieve through penance and devotion, flight of spirit and diving into the treasure of Divine mysteries; that knowledge is attained by the prophets straightaway. They are charged with the responsibilities of their apostolic ministry after being illuminated by the lamp of sanctity and that is the reason why they are able to awaken the zeal for fellowship of God in thousands of their followers.

"Hence, a breath of the prophets outweighs the entire life of saints. The saints are able to cast off their humanly veil and speak of the secrets of spiritual existence only after attaining the highest degree of sanctity but they still remain under the shadow of the weaknesses human flesh is heir to; but the prophets, on the other hand, find the secrets of nature unveiled before them on the very first step of their ministry. The last lap of the saints is the starting point of the prophets or, to be truthful, even the destination of saints cannot compare with the outstart of the prophets. Once someone asked Khwāja Bāyezīd al-Bistāmī: 'What do you say about the life of the prophets'. 'Heaven forbid!', he replied 'we can never gain entrance in their realm.' The way the stations and stages of sainthood remain hidden from the eyes of uninitiated masses, the exalted reaches of prophethood are beyond the imaginative flight of the saints. Prophets take to strides while saints stroll: one rides the skies while the other creeps on the earth.

"In clarity and purity of spirit, virtue and sanctity the entire bodily frame of the prophets is like the head and heart of the saints, intoxicated with the love of God. There is thus a great difference between the men who have found entrance to the place which, for others, is the goal of their heart's yearning.[1]"

Paramountcy of Sharīʿah

Another indecorous thinking that had gained popularity among certain mystics of the day was that the established religious institution could be brushed aside by them, for, according to them, one needs to follow the commandments of the *Sharīʿah* up to a certain stage; but when he reaches the stage of Acquaintance and attains the fellowship of Divine Essence, he could reject the demand for external conformity to the *Sharīʿah*. The wide diffusion of this erratic idea had given reins to many illiterate and misguided mystics who, acting as

1. 20th letter

impious ministers of evil, were spreading infidelity and irreligiousness among the superstitious masses. Even certain educated persons had started citing the Quranic verse: 'And worship thy Lord until there cometh unto thee the death.'[1] to support this contention. They argued that the *Sharīʿah* need be followed in letter and spirit until one attains the stage of certitude of the transcendental Truth, but once one reaches that stage the chains of Law fall to pieces for him. Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī raised his voice in defence of the authentic religious view and demonstrated the fallacy of the antinomian practitioners of sufism. He set forth arguments to show that whatever stage or station may be attained by a traveller of spirit, he has to follow the rules of the *Shariʿah* to the end of his life's journey, for they are never suspended or superseded by the elevation of spirit.

The following quotation from one of his letters will show that Makhdūm severely taxed those who opposed the authority of the established religious institution finding expression in the laws of the *Shariʿah*.

"Brother Shams ud-dīn ought to be aware of the subtle ways of the Devil who sometimes makes the mystics believe that the object of renouncing sin is to weaken the natural human desires and inclinations so that the remembrance of God overcomes them and cleanses the heart of its impurities. The whole of this endeavour is meant, the Devil tells them, to attain the perfection of Divine Knowledge, and so is also the *Sharīʿah* a means to arrive at the same goal. Thus, if a man already reaches that destination, what has he to do with the luggage and means of transport. The prescribed forms of liturgical service would then become a veil for him. One already beholding Eternal Beauty needs no prostrations, devotions and orisons as these are the aids for attuning the strings of one's

1. Q. XV : 99—Almost all the eminent commentators of the Qur'ān hold the view that the word *Yaqīn*, in the Arabic text, means death in this verse while certain mystics interpreted the word to mean spiritual enlightenment.

heart with the melody of Divine Essence. They claim that they find themselves engulfed by celestial glory and the reign of spirit—But, in truth and reality, they give expression to what Satan had felt when he was asked to prostrate before Adam. Being aware of his station he thought that nothing would he gain by bending low before a being lower than him. God has not referred to this story in the Qur'ān as a myth or fable but to serve as a warning for those who are given to the ruses of Satan. God wanted to tell them that nobody should dare flout His Law. Verily, the precursors of faith have correctly emphasised that the path chalked out by the *Sharīʿah* is the only way to attain the fellowship of God.

"Here Satan has kept an important point concealed from the view of this misguided group. He has persuaded them to believe that the only purpose of the *Sharīʿah* is to attain proximity of the Lord. But this is wrong for the *Sharīʿah* is meant for a lot more than that. Take for instance, the prayers prescribed for five times a day; these are like five poles supporting a canopy of human perfection; if the poles are taken away, the canopy will fall to the ground as Iblīs[1] himself fell from his exalted position. Now, if you want to know how the prayers lend their support to make a man virtuous; my brother, this is something beyond your limited intellect to conceive. These are like the properties or characteristic qualities of medicines or other substances, or the attracting power of the magnet but nobody can find out the reason why these properties have been embedded in these substances."

Practical Wisdom of the Sharīʿah

The practical wisdom of the *Sharīʿah,* utility of its practical functioning and the way it guards and enhances the faith and moral virtues of the believer and links his spirit to the Divine Essence has been set out by Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī in one of his letters. He shows through an allegory how disregard for

1. The name of Satan

the rules of the *Sharī^cah* leads a man to the destruction wrought by the devil within him.

"Suppose a man constructed a palatial house on the top of a hill and provided every means of comfort within it. When the time came to quit this world, he bade his son to make whatever alterations he might desire in the house, but to leave untouched an aromatic grass planted by him in a portion of the courtyard even if the grass became dry. When spring came, the hill and vales wore the look of emerald green, flowers of numerous varieties blossomed forth and filled the air with their fragrance and the sweet smell of the old grass was overcome by redolent smells. The boy thought that his father had planted that old spicy grass merely for fragrance and therefore it was of no use to let it be there any more. He, therefore, ordered his servants to pick out the grass. But when the grass was thrown away, a black serpent came out of a hole and bit the boy. The aromatic grass planted by his father had two properties, first, to keep the house filled with its aroma, and, secondly, to keep away the snakes. It had an antipathic smell to the reptiles. The boy was so proud of his knowledge that he considered everything not known to him to be nonexistent. Being ignorant of the Divine revelation that 'of knowledge ye have been vouchsafed but little,'[1] the poor fellow was brought to ruin. Similar is the case with those misinformed mystics who think that the wisdom and secrets of the *Sharī^cah* laid open to them are all that is worth knowing about it. This is a great mistake they have made like many other travellers of spirit who have fallen a prey to this fatal belief. They had thought that the *Sharī^cah* had only one objective and thus they could never think of its other aims and designs which were more important for attaining the best ends. They could never conceive that if the *Sharī^cah* intended to achieve only the end they had in view, then why did the Prophet spend his nights standing in prayer until his feet used to swell up. The Prophet never said that

1. Q. XVII: 85

the prayer was incumbent on his followers but he was exempt from it."[1]

In another letter on the subject Makhdūm says:

"All those doctors of divinity, *sūfīs* and saints who had attained the height of sanctity have held the view that every rule and condition laid down by the Islamic doctrine of duties is imperceptibly related to some spiritual merit beneficial for Divine blessing in the Hereafter. All of them have scrupulously followed the discipline of these laws till the end of their life. Once an attendant of Sheikh Junaid Baghdādī, who was helping him in performing ablution, forgot to pass his fingers through his beard. The Sheikh caught hold of his hand and reminded him to do so for it was a *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Some persons present on the occasion asked: "Is it not permissible to omit these voluntary details especially when one is unable to perform the ablution by himself?" The Sheikh replied: "I have been blessed by God solely because of acting on the *Sunnah* of the Prophet." This was the way trodden by those who had been blessed with interior illumination; but, alas, those who are misinformed are so easily thrown off the false scent. They think that whatever is beyond their understanding or not known to them, does not exist at all. *Fajr* has two *rakʿats* of prayer, *zuhr* has four, *ʿasr* has again four, *maghrib* has three and *ʿishā'* has four of them, and then each *rakʿat* is completed by a genuflexion and two prostrations. Each of these has its own merit propitious for attaining the entelechy of spirit. The worth and excellence of all these acts are manifested as soon as a man breathes his last. Then he knows that no perfection, no exaltation of spirit is of any use to him if the stipulations of the *Sharīʿah* are taken out of them. Every wayfarer of mysticism who will leave this world in that condition would find himself utterly ruined and then he would cry out: 'What has happened to the perfection of spirit attained by me?' Then the reply he would get will be: 'The plank of your perfection was not nailed to your

1. 70th letter

coffin and so it has been blown away in the same way as all the merits and perfections of Iblīs were reduced to dust for a single transgression of the Divine command."[1]

Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī was so rigidly opposed to the *ṣūfīs'* disregard of religious duties that in a letter he lashes out at their practice in these words: "This is absolutely wrong and the creed of renegades who say that one (mysticism) is permissible without the other (Law of Islam). They assert that when some one attains the Truth and is rewarded with illuminations and beatifications, the Law becomes superfluous for him. Fie upon such beliefs and creeds."[2]

Significance of the Sharīʿah

Makhdūm held that the path of mysticism was a misnomer without acting on the precepts of the *Sharīʿah.* Says he:

"Nobody can get anything out of mysticism if he does not obey the precepts of the *Sharīʿah.* It is only the renegades and apostates who hold that one is permissible without the other. They maintain that the *Sharīʿah* becomes needless after one has found the essence of Truth. Damn this belief! *Sharīʿah* is the outward expression of faith, but without inward credence it is hypocricy; and the belief without external imperative is apostasy. The exterior of the *Sharīʿah* without interior faith is a defect: the faith concealed in the heart without outward expression is no more than avarice. That which is manifest is so integrated with its inner content that the two can never be separated."[3]

Emulation of the Prophet

In his letters Makhdūm Yahyā Manerī always expounded the view that neither salvation could be achieved nor any perfection of spirit, or, for that matter, nor the fellowship of Eternal Being can be attained without following in the footsteps of the

1. 26th letter
2. *Ibid*
3. *Ibid*

beloved Prophet of God. Commenting upon the Quranic verse: 'Say, (O Muhammad to mankind): If ye Love Allah, follow me, Allah will love you.'[1] Makhdūm gave expression to his inmost feelings and the ardent love for the Apostle of God in these verses of a gnostic poet:

Seek not a new path, his word is gospel,
Seal your lips and stop all prattle.
Whatever says he, saith the Lord,
Whate'er he does, is an act of God.
Be dust unto him to wear the crown,
To have your way, first knuckle down.
Like the dust of his way, if not is he,
He'll lick the dust, even if an angel be he."[2]

1. Q. III: 31
2. 50th letter

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Chronological Table

A.H.	A.D.	Events and Personalities
93	712	Muhammad ibn Qāsim Taqaffī captured Sind
136-158	753-774	Reign of Caliph Mansūr
198-218	813-833	Reign of Caliph Al-Mamūn
208	824	Saiyida Nafīsa (d.)
339	950	Abu Nasr Al-Fārābī (d.)
409/411	1017/1020	Khwāja Abū Muhammad Chishtī (d.)
416	1025	Sultān Mahmūd attacked Somnāth
421	1030	Sultān Muhmūd of Ghazni (d.)
428	1037	Abū ʿAlī Sīnā (d.)
538	1143	Muhammad Jārullāh Zamakhsharī (d.)
563	1168	Khwāja Ziā' ud-dīn Abul Najīb ʿAbdul Qādir Firdausī
569	1173	Birth of Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī
571-588	1175-1192	Reign of Prithvirāj Chauhān
571-602	1175-1205	Expeditions of Shahāb ud-dīn Muhammad Gorī against India
584	1188	Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn meets Khwāja Qutub ud-dīn
586-87	1190-91	Shahāb ud-dīn Muhammad Ghorī defeated by Prithvirāj
588	1192	Prithvirāj defeated by Muhammad Ghorī
595	1198	Ibn Rushd (d.)
602	1206	Shahāb ud-dīn Muhammad Ghorī (d.)

A.H.	A.D.	Events and personalities
606	1209	Mongol's attack on India repulsed
10th Jamada ul-Ūlā 610	27th September 1213	Khwāja Najm ud-dīn Kubrā (d.)
627	1230	Khwāja Moʿīn ud-dīn Chishtī (d.)
632	1235	Ibn Al-Fāriz (d.)
633	1236	Khwāja Qutb ud-dīn Bakhtiyār Kāki (d.)
636	1239	Birth of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliya
638	1240	Muhī ud-dīn Ibn ʿArabī (d.)
647	1249	Al-Malik al-Sālah Ayyūb (d.)
647	1249	ʿIzz ud-dīn Aibeck ascends the throne
650	1252	Hasan ibn Muhammad As-Saghānī (d.)
652	1254	Abul Barkāt Majd ud-dīn ibn Taimiyah (d.)
655	1257	Nūr ud-dīn ʿAli ascends the throne
657	1259	Saif ud-dīn Katz deposes Nūr ud-dīn ʿAlī
658	1260	Saif ud-dīn Katz slain
658	1260	Rukn ud-dīn Baibers ascends the throne
661	1263	Birth of Sheikh Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī
10th Rabi-ul-Awwal, 661	22nd January 1263	Birth of Ibn Taimiyah
5th Muharram 664	17th October, 1265	Khwāja Farīd ud-dīn (d.)
672	1273	Nasīr ud-dīn Tūsī (d.)
677	1278	Saiyid Qutb ud-dīn Madnī (d.)
678-689	1279-1290	Reign of Al-Malik al-Nāsir Qalawoon
682	1283	Shahāb ud-dīn ʿAbdul Halīm Ibn Taimiyah (d.)
683	1284	Ibn Taimiyah's first speech

A.H.	A.D.	Events and personalities
684	1285	Sheikh Kamāl ud-dīn Zāhid (d.)
690	1291	Sheikh Yahyā Manerī, father of Makhdūm ul-Mulk (d.)
691	1292	Sheikh Najīb ud-dīn Firdausī (d.)
692	1293	Ibn Taimiyah goes for *Haj*
694	1295	Conversion of Ghazān to Islām
696	1297	Mongol hordes Invade India
697	1298	Land Reforms by Hosam ud-dīn Lājeen
698	1299	Tumult kicked up against Ibn Taimiyah
699	1300	Egyptian forces come to aid of Damascus
27th Rabi-ul-Awwal 699	24th December, 1299	Battle between al-Malik al-Nāsir Muhammad ibn Qalawoon and Gazān
3rd Rabi-ul-Thani, 699	28th December, 1299	Damascus emissaries meet Ghazān
699	1299	Ibn Taimiyah joins Aqoosh Al-Afram in his expedition against heretics
700	1300	Taqī ud-dīn Ibn Daqīq ul-ᶜId meets Ibn Taimiyah
2nd Ramadhān, 702	20th April, 1303	Second battle of Sultān al-Malik al-Nāsir with Tartars
704	1305	Al-Mujāhid Ibrāhīm ibn Qattān produced before Ibn Taimiyah
Zil Hijja, 704	July, 1305	Second expedition against heretical sects
2nd Muharram, 705	25th July, 1305	Third expedition against heretical sects
9th Jamada-ul Ūlā 705	27th November, 1305	Complaint lodged by Rafaᶜīyahs against Ibn Taimiyah

A.H.	A.D.	Events and personalities
5th Ramadhān, 705	21st March, 1306	Ibn Taimiyah summoned to Egypt
22nd Ramadhān, 705	7th April, 1306	Ibn Taimiyah reached Egypt
30th Ramadhan, 706	3rd April, 1307	Ibn Taimiyah offered to be released from jail
14th Safar, 707	15th August, 1307	Qāzī Badr ud-dīn Jamāʿah meets Ibn Taimiyah in jail
23rd Rabi ul-Awwal, 707	22nd September, 1307	Amīr Hosam ud-dīn Mohanna ibn 'Isā' takes out Ibn Taimiyah from jail
Safar, 709	July, 1309	Ibn Taimiyah's internment in Alexandria
13th Shaʿabān, 709	16th January, 1310	Nasīr ibn Qalawoon captured Damascus
7th Zil Qaʿadā, 709	8th April, 1310	Baibers Al-Jashanghir executed
4th Rajab, 711	16th November, 1311	Ibn Taimiyah manhandled by riff-raffs
712	1312	Royal edicts issued on the advice of Ibn Taimiyah
Shawwl, 712	February, 1313	Reports of Tartar invasion
5th Rabi-ul-Awwal, 718	7th May, 1318	Ibn Taimiyah forbidden to give juristic opinion on divorce

A.H.	A.D.	Events and personalities
10th Muharram, 721	9th February, 1321	Ibn Taimiyah released from preventive detention
721	1321	Qutub Ud-dīn Mubārak Shāh killed by Khusrū Khān
721-24	1321-24	Construction of Makhdūm's monastery
721-26	1321-26	Ibn Taimiyah devotes his time to teaching
20th Zilhijja, 724	8th December, 1324	Warrants of vicegerency signed by Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn
725	1325	Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq ascends the throne
18th Rabi ul-Ākhir, 725	3rd April, 1325	Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn (d.)
7th Sha'abān, 726	9th July, 1326	Ibn Taimiyah placed under detention
9th Jamada-ul-Akhra, 728	21st April, 1328	Writing material taken away from Ibn Taimiyah
22nd Zil-Qa'ada, 728	28th September, 1328	Ibn Taimiyah (d.)
734	1333	Ibn Saiyid-in-Nās (d.)
752	1351	Sultān Mohammad Tughlaq (d.)
759-776	1358-1375	Sultān Muhammad Shāh Bahmanī
767	1366	Sultān Muhammad Shāh Bahmanī entered Daulatabad
780	1378	Saiyid 'Alī Hamadānī's arrival in Kashmir

A.H.	A.D.	Events and personalities
6th Shawwāl, 782	10th June, 1380	Sheikh Saraf ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī (d.)
786	1384	Amīr Syed ʿAlī Hamadanī (d.)
786	1384	Maulānā Farīd ud-dīn ʿĀlam (d.)
791	1389	Qāzī ʿAbdul Muqtadir Kindī (d.)
801	1399	Sheikh Zain ud-dīn (d.)
808	1406	Ibn Khaldūn (d.)
809	1406	Maulānā Khwājgī of Delhi (d.)
820	1417	Sheikh Ahmad of Thānesar (d.)
825	1422	Saiyid Muhammad Gesū Darāz (d.)
849	1445	Sheikh Shahāb ud-dīn bin ʿUmar (d.)
874	1469	Muhammad ibn Qutb (d.)
986	1578	Muhammad Tāhir Patni (d.)
1003	1595	Sheikh Yaqūb Sharafī (d.)
1034	1624	Sheikh Ahmad Srahindī (d.)
1047	1637	Maulānā Jamāl ul-Aulia Chishti (d.)
1052	1642	Sheikh ʿAbdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlavi (d.)
1085	1673	Shāh Pīr Muhammad of Lucknow (d.)
1161	1747	Mulla Nizām ud-dīn (d.)

Glossary of the Arabic and Persian Terms

Ahl-i-Sunnat Wal Jamaʿat—A term generally applied to a sect of Muslims who acknowledge, in addition to the Qurʾān, the *Sunnah* or path of the Prophet to be the correct version of Islām. The *Sunnīs* i. e. one of the path, embrace by far the greater portion of the Islamic world. They believe the first four Caliphs to have been rightful successors of the Prophet and belong to one of the four schools of jurisprudence founded by Imām Abū Hanifa, Imām ash-Shafeʿī, Imām Mālik or Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal. *See* Sunnīs.

Allah-O-Akbar—*Lit.* 'God is great.' An ejaculation which is called *Takbīr.* It occurs frequently in the liturgical form of worship and stands for the declaration of God's absolute over-lordship over the world.

Ashʿarite—A sect formed by Abul Hasan ʿAlī ibn Ismaʿīl al-Ashʿarī, born 206 A. H. (873-74 A. D.) Ashʿarites hold that the attributes of God are distinct from His essence, yet in such a way as to forbid any comparison between God and His creations. Ashʿarites traverse the main positions of the Muʿtazilites, denying that man can by his reason alone, rise to the knowledge of good and evil. They adopt the middle course between the Muʿtazilites and the Hanbalites. Unlike the former they neither accept the claim of reason to be completely free to discern metaphysical realities and deliver its verdict about the content and nature, attributes and characteristics of the Supreme Reality nor do they agree with the Hanbalites who reject the claim of reason to have any say in expounding the revealed Truth.

ʿAsr—The time for obligatory prayer offered midway when the sun has begun to decline and sunset.

Assassins—Corruption of *hashshiyah* or hasish-eater. A sect of the Batinites who undertook to kill treacherously their enemies.

Ayah—*Lit.* "a sign or miracle." The term is also used for one of the smaller portions of the chapter of the Qur'ān or a verse.

Baʿit—Oath of allegiance taken by the people for remaining faithful to the head of a Muslim State or any other person acknowledged as spiritual guide.

Bātinite—(or *Bātiniyah*). *Lit.* 'inner, esoteric.' They maintained that only a symbolic interpretation with gradual initiation by an illuminated teacher could reveal the real meaning of the Qur'ān. The word, they claimed, was like a veil, hiding the deep occult meaning never attainable to those clinging to literal explanation. Being a Shiʿaite theological school of thought, they also upheld the doctrine of the divine source of Imāmate (the spiritual leadership of an *Imām*) and of the transmission of indefeasible right of Prophets vicegerency by divinely ordained hereditary succession of Caliph ʿAlī. The widespread Ismāʿilite sect and its offsprings like Qarmātians, Fātimides, Assassins, etc. belong to the sphere of Batinite thought.

Chishtīyah—The order of mysticism founded by Khwāja Moʿīn ud-dīn Chishtī Sajazī. It is the most popular *Sūfi* order in India.

Darul Hadīth—An institution or faculty for higher studies of the science of Traditions.

Druze—Also Daruzī. A sect founded by an emissary of the sixth Fātimide caliph, Al-Hākim l' Amr illāh.

Fajr—The time for obligatory prayer performed after dawn but before sunrise.

Fiqah—The dogmatic theology of Islam amplifying the Islamic ideals of ethical precepts in day-to-day affairs of the believers.

Fātimide—A Shiʿaite dynasty of 13 Caliphs or *Imāms* in North Africa (911-1171) and in Egypt (969-1171). Unlike other heads of the larger or smaller States emerging within the sphere of ʿAbbāsid Caliphate or which conceded to the Caliphs, at least to save appearance, the Fātimides challenged the ʿAbbāsids for both the temporal and spiritual power. Beyond its political significance, however, it fulfilled the apocalyptic belief in the reign of Mahdī, as essential tenet of the Ismaʿilite branch of Shiʿaism.

Firdausiyah—The mystic order founded by Khwāja Badr ud-dīn of Samarkand. The order laid emphasis on contemplation, renunciation of the world, annihilation of the self and concealment of spiritual powers. The order laid particular emphasis on following the injunctions of the *Sharīʿah*.

Hadīth—*See Sunnah.*

Hāfiz—A person who has committed to his memory the entire Qur'ān.

Haj—The pilgrimage to Mecca performed in the month of Zil-Hijja or the twelfth month of Muslim year. It is the fourth pillar of Islamic religious observances, and an incumbent religious duty founded upon express injunctions of the Qur'ān.

Hajee—A person who has performed the *Haj* or pilgrimage to Mecca during the appointed days.

Hājib—An official appointed by the Tartar converts to Islam to settle or adjudicate upon their personal disputes according to *Yasaq*, the Mongol code.

Hakīmites—A sect of Fātimides founded by the sixth Fātimide Caliph Al-Hākim, who asserted that he was the express image of God. Al-Hākim ascended the throne at the age of eleven years in 996 A. D. and was assassinated in 1021 A. D.

Halālah—The marriage of a divorced woman with another man who must consummate the marriage and divorce her, before the re-marriage of such a woman to her first husband.

Hanafite—Those following the juristic school of Imām Abū Hanīfah an-Nuʿmān (80-150 A. H./700-767 A. D.), the great Sunnī Imām and jurisconsult. The Hanafites, spread

over Turkey, Afghanistan and Indian sub-continent, form the great majority of the Muslims.

Hanbalites—Followers of Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855 A. D.), founder of one of the four orthodox sects of the *Sunnīs*. The modern Wahābīs claim to follow the teaching of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Hanbalites asserted the paramount authority of the Qur'ān with the Traditions as against superiority of reason over faith.

Haqīqat—*Lit.* 'Truth.' The essence or meaning of a thing. A stage in the mystic journey of the *ṣūfī* where he is supposed to receive an inspiration or illumination of the true nature of Godhead, that is to arrive at the 'Truth'.

Hisbat-ullah—*Lit.* the 'Party of Allah'.

ᶜId—A common name for *Id-ul-Fitr*, the festival of fast-breaking at the end of the month of Ramadhan and *Id-ul-Adha* or the feast of sacrifice celebrated on the tenth day of Zil-Hijja.

Iftār—*Lit.* 'Breaking' of fast in the evening after sunset.

Ijmᶜa—*Lit.* 'Collecting' or 'assembling'. In Islamic jurisprudence *Ijmᶜa* expresses the unanimous consent or consensus of the men of learning and piety over any juristic issue.

Imām—*Lit.* 'One who leads' i. e. a normal guide or a model. It commonly denotes in the Sunnite creed the leader of the congregation in prayer who should be conversant with the ritual. The term is also applied to one learned and pious and capable of making logical deductions on a legal or theological question. In the Shiᶜah doctrine, however, the term covers an entirely different notion. To them the *Imām* is the faultless and infallible leader, an offspring of ᶜAlī, to whom spiritual leadership is supposed to have been passed on from the Prophet through his son-in-law and the fourth Caliph ᶜAlī.

Imāmat—The office of *Imām*.

Imām Bāra—A building in which the festival of *Muharram* is celebrated by the Shiᶜāhs to commemorate the martyrdom of Husain, son of Caliph ᶜAlī.

ᶜIshā'—The time for the last of the daily obligatory prayers, performed when the night has closed in.

Ishrāq—A voluntary prayer performed when the sun has well risen.

Ismāʿilites—or *Ismāʿiliyah.* Also called seveners (*Sabāiyah*), they formed the group of extremist Shiʿahs originating from a schism which took place in the Shiʿah community towards the end of the eighth century about the question of the succession of the seventh *Imām* Ismaʿīl. The sixth *Imām*, Jaʿafar al-Sādiq, had disinheritd Ismaʿīl in favour of his younger son Mūsā al-Kāzim but a faction of the Shiʿahs remained faithful to Ismāʿīl. Later, the Ismāʿīlites proved their vitality under such different aspects as the terrorism of Qarmātians sectaries, the caliphate of the Fātimides, the Brethren of Purity and the once so dreaded Assassins (also see Bātinites).

Jihād—*Lit.* an effort or striving. A religious war with those unbelievers who attack the Muslims or are inimical to them. It is an incumbent religious duty, established in the Qurʿān and the Traditions as a divine institution, and enjoined specially for the defence of a Muslim land and repelling evil from the Muslims.

Jizyah—The capitation tax realized from the non-Muslim subjects in lieu of protection afforded to them by a Muslim State. Such non-Muslim subjects, called *zimmis*, are exempted from military duty in defence of the realm but enjoy full citizenship rights like other Muslims, who, besides paying *zakat*, not levied on non-Muslims, are also liable to be drafted for active service.

Khilāfat Nāmah—The warrant of vicegerency conferred by a *sūfī* saint on his disciple who is thus allowed to preach and admit others in the mystical order of his mentor.

Khwārij—A sect which denied the authority of the Caliphs and believed that commission of a major sin condemned one to eternal torment in the Hell. They seceded from the armed forces of Caliph ʿAlī after the war of Siffīn in 13 A. H. as a protest against the appointment of arbitrators to decide the issue of caliphate between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah.

Madarsa—An educational institution, specially for

teaching of religious sciences.

Maghrib—*Lit.* west. The time for obligatory prayer offered just after the sunset.

Mamlūk—*Lit.* 'Slave', the designation of the imported Turk slaves serving in the army.

Mᶜarifat—*Mᶜarifah* or Divine gnosis is a stage in the mystic journey of spirit wherein the *sūfī*, after occupying himself with contemplation and investigations concerning the nature, attribute and works of God, attains the 'knowledge' of these.

Maulānā—*Lit.* 'a lord or master'. A term generally used for a learned man.

Mu'azzin—One who gives the call to prayer.

Mustaufi-ul-Mamālik—The Accountant General of the realm.

Muᶜtazilites—or *Muᶜtazilah. Lit.* 'The Separatists'. A school of thought founded by Wasil ibn ᶜAtā', who separated from the school of Hasan al-Basrī. The chief tenets of the school were: (1) They rejected all eternal attributes of God saying that eternity is the proper or formal attribute of His essence; that God knows by His essence, and not by His knowledge; that to affirm these attributes is the same thing as to make more eternals than one; and that the Unity of God is inconsistent with such an opinion. (2) They believed the word of God (Qur'ān) to have been created, and whatever was created was also an accident, and liable to perish. (3) They held that if any Muslim is guilty of grievous sin, and dies without repentence, he will be eternally damned. (4) They also denied the vision of God in Paradise by the corporeal eye, and rejected all comparisons or similitudes applied to God.

During the reign of the ᶜAbbāsid Caliphs al-Māmūn (813-833), al-Muᶜtasim (833-842) and al-Wāthiq (842-847) the Muᶜtazilah were in high favour.

Naqshbandiyah—The mystic order founded by Khwāja Pir Muhammad Naqshband (d. 719/1319). They usually perform *Zikr-i-Kafī* or silent devotions by way of the remembrance of God.

Nizāmiyah—The order of mysticism followed by the disciples and followers of Khwāja Nizām ud-dīn Auliā'.

Nusayrīs—Also *Nusayrī*. A sect of the Shi'ahs founded by Ibn Nusair (d. 873 A. D.), a follower and emissary of the eleventh Shi'aite Imām al-Hasan al-'Askarī. They lived in Jabl Nusairiyah and numbered about 2,50,000.

Pīr—*Lit.* 'An elder'. The term denotes a spiritual leader.

Qādiriyah—The *Qādiriyah* order of mysticism sprang up from the celebrated Saiyid Abdul Qādir Jīlānī (1058-1111) whose shrine is in Baghdād.

Qārī—One who reads the Qur'ān correctly and is acquainted with the science of pronouncing the words of the scripture faultlessly.

Qāzī—Sometimes written as Cādī. A Judge or administrator of law appointed by the ruler of a Muslim State.

Qiblah—The direction in which Muslims offer prayer.

Qiyās—The analogical reasoning of the learned with regard to the teaching of the Qur'ān, *Hadīth* and *Ijmā'*. The essential conditions for such an analogical reasoning are that (1) the precept or practice upon which it is founded should be of common and not of special application, (2) the cause of the injunction should be known and understood, (3) the decision must be based upon either the Qur'ān, the *Hadīth*, or the *Ijmā'* and (4) the decision arrived at must not be contrary to anything expressly enjoined elsewhere in the Qur'ān and the *Hadīth*.

Rāfizī—*Lit.* 'A forsaker'. Synonymous with *Rāfizah*. A term used for a body of soldiers, belonging to a sect of Shi'ahs, who joined Zaid, the son of 'Alī ibn Husain. They demanded that Zaid should abuse Abū Bakr and 'Umar, the first two Caliphs, but on his refusal to do so, they left him to the mercy of Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf. Zaid fought bravely with the handful of his remaining companions who all fell against the vastly superior enemy.

Rak'at—(Pl. *Rak'ah*). A unit of prayer consisting of one genuflection and two prostrations.

Rafā'iyah—A mystic order founded by Saiyid Ahmad bin 'Ali bin Yahya ar-Rafā'ī al-Hasnī Abdul 'Abbās (512-578 A. H./1118-1182 A. D.) in Iraq. Author of a number of books, Saiyid Ahmad ar-Rafā'ī is reported to have one hundred eighty thousand disciples. The dominant feature of the order was emphasis on service of humanity, self effacement, gracious behaviour and severe moral and spiritual discipline. Later on, however, an extremist group of his followers took to wonder working and developed antinomian tendencies.

Sab'īniyah—A pantheistic sect of *sūfīs* who believed that everything is God, and of the same essence.

Sadr-i-Jahanī—The officer charged with the responsibility of enforcing Islamic rules and regulations and disbursing stipends to Muslim divines, scholars and men of piety.

Sahīhain—Consists of the two books of Traditions considered to be the most correct books.

1. *Bukhāri* of Muhammad Isma'īl al Bukhārī (d. 256 A. H.).

2. *Muslim* of Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj (d. 261 A. H.).

Sahūr—The meal which is taken before dawn while keeping fast.

Shāfe'ītes—followers of one of the four juristic schools of orthodox Islam. The founder of this school was Imām Muhammad ibn Idrīs as Shafe'ī, who was born at Asqalon in Palestine (95/714). The Shafe'ītes are found in South India and Egypt.

Shar'īah—*Lit* 'The way'. The law, including both the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Traditions of the Prophet. It has been defined as 'the way or road in the religion of Muhammad, which God has established for the guidance of His people, both for the worship of God and for the duties of life'.

Sheikh—A title accorded to the venerable doctors of religion. It is used in addressing theological scholars and divines who have acquired a certain spiritual prominence, without necessarily holding a religious office.

Sheikh-ul-Islam—The highest ecclesiastical office under a Muslim State.

Shīʿah—*Lit.* 'Split' and also 'followers'. A general designation covering various sects of Muslims not following the conformist or orthodox faith. The schism whose origin goes back to the early years of Islam had its beginning in the rivalry for the caliphate between the Ummayyad and Alid clans after caliph ʿAlī's death and Muʿāwiyah's accession to the Caliphate. The Alid party maintained that this highest office of Islam was a prerogative of the Prophet's house. They also maintained that ʿAlī was the first legitimate *Imām* or successor of the Prophet and therefore rejected the first three successors of the Prophet. The belief in this regard later developed into a faith that the Prophet's God-willed spiritual and secular guidance had passed from him to ʿAlī who, himself an incarnation of the Divine Spirit, had bequeathed his mission to a sequence of hereditary *Imāms* of his progeny. On this soil was set up a theological framework which left ample room for the most varied opinions, some of which hard on the borderline of Islam.

Shirk—*Lit.* Ascribing plurality to the Deity or associating partners to God. It consists of ascribing divine knowledge to others than God; ascribing divine powers to others than God; offering worship to created beings; and, the performance of ceremonies which imply reliance on others than God.

Sihāh-us-Sittah—The following are the Sihāh Sittah, or 'six correct' books of Traditions, received by Sunnī Muslims.

(1) *Al-Bukhārī*, of Muhammad Ismail al-Bukari (d. 256 A. H.).

(2) *Muslim*, of Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj (d. 261 A. H.).

(3) *Al-Tirmizi*, of Abū ʿIsā Muhammad al-Tirmizī (d. 279 A. H.).

(4) *Abū Dā'ūd*, of Abū Dā'ūd as-Sajistānī (d. 275 A. H.).

(5) *An-Nisāī*, of Abū ʿAbdur Rahmān an-Nisāī (d. 303 A. H.).

(6) *Ibn Mājah*, of Abū Abdullāh Muhammad Ibn Mājah (d. 273 A. H.).

Sūfī—One who professes the mystic principles for attaining the gnosis of God. The principal occupation of a *sūfī* is meditation on the Unity of God, the remembrance of God's names and the progressive advancement in spiritual life to attain propinquity of God.

Suharwardiyah—A popular order of mysticism founded by Sheikh Shahāb ud-dīn Suharwardī of Baghdad (d. 602/1205).

Sunnah—As opposed to the Qur'ān which is a direct revelation from God, the Prophet also received what is regarded as an *unread* revelation which enabled him to give authoritative declarations on religious matters. The Arabic word used for these Traditions is *Hadīth* and *Sunnah* (a saying or a custom). The Prophet gave very special instructions respecting the faithful transmission of his sayings. Gradually, however, spurious Traditions also gained currency for which an elaborate canon of subjective and historical criticism was evolved for the acceptance or rejection of the Traditions.

The *Sunnah* represents an authentic interpretation of the Qur'ān, a valuable source of law and an infallible guide for the overwhelming majority of the Muslims in every situation of their spiritual and secular life as opposed to *Bid'ah* (innovation) in religion.

Sunnī—*Lit.* 'One of the path'. A term generally applied to all Muslims who consider the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, manifested by his sayings, acts or tacit approval and transmitted by the companions of the Prophet, as the infallible guide of the faithful and an authentic interpretation of the Qur'ān.

The Sunnis embrace by far the greater portion of the Muslim world.

Tahajjud—A voluntary prayer offered after midnight.

Talāq—The sentence of divorce. The Islamic law of divorce or release from the marriage tie is founded upon express injunctions contained in the Qur'ān, as well as, the

Traditions and exhaustively treated in the works on jurisprudence.

Tarāwīh—The plural of *Tarwīh* i. e. rest. The prayers, of usually twenty *rakʿats*, recited at night during the month of Ramadhan ; so called because the congregation sit down and rest after every fourth *rakʿat*.

Tauhīd—A term used to express the Unity of the Godhead, which is the great fundamental basis of Islam. The teaching of the Qur'ān and the Prophet as to the nature of God, His Unity, without any associate or partner, His absolute Power and the other essential attributes of an Eternal and Almighty Being is the most important part of the Islamic faith.

Tarīqat—'A path'. The *Tariqah* or spiritual path which is usually known as *tasawwuf* or mysticism, is the inner and esoteric dimension of Islam and like the *Sharīʿah* has its roots in the Qur'ān and prophetic practice. Being the actual nature of spiritual path, the traveller on the path of *Tarīqat* seeks to emulate the life of the Prophet who is the prototype of spirituality and thus realises the meaning of unity or *Tauhīd* in its fullness.

ʿUlama—Plural of *Aalim*. One who knows, learned ; a scholar. In the plural form the word is used as the title of the learned doctors in Islamic theology and law.

ʿUrs—A term used for the ceremonies observed at the anniversary of the death of any celebrated saint.

Walayet—*Lit.* Sainthood or state of spiritual elevation.

Walī—(Pluarl *Auliā'*). The term is applied to a saint or holy man who has attained a high state of sanctity by virtue of his divine illumination and pious life.

Yoga—Hindu system of philosophic meditation and asceticism designed to effect the reunion of the devotee's soul with the universal spirit.

Yogi—One who practises *yoga*.

Zimmī—A member of the *Ahl-uz-Zummah* a non-Muslim subject of a Muslim Government, belonging to the Jewish, Christian or Sabean creed, who, for the payment of poll or

capitation-tax, enjoys security of his person, property and religious observance in a Muslim country without bearing the responsibility of defending the realm.

Zuhr—The time for afternoon obligatory prayer.

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